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THE AMERICAN SPECTATOR®

VOL. 16 OCTOBER 1983 NO. 10

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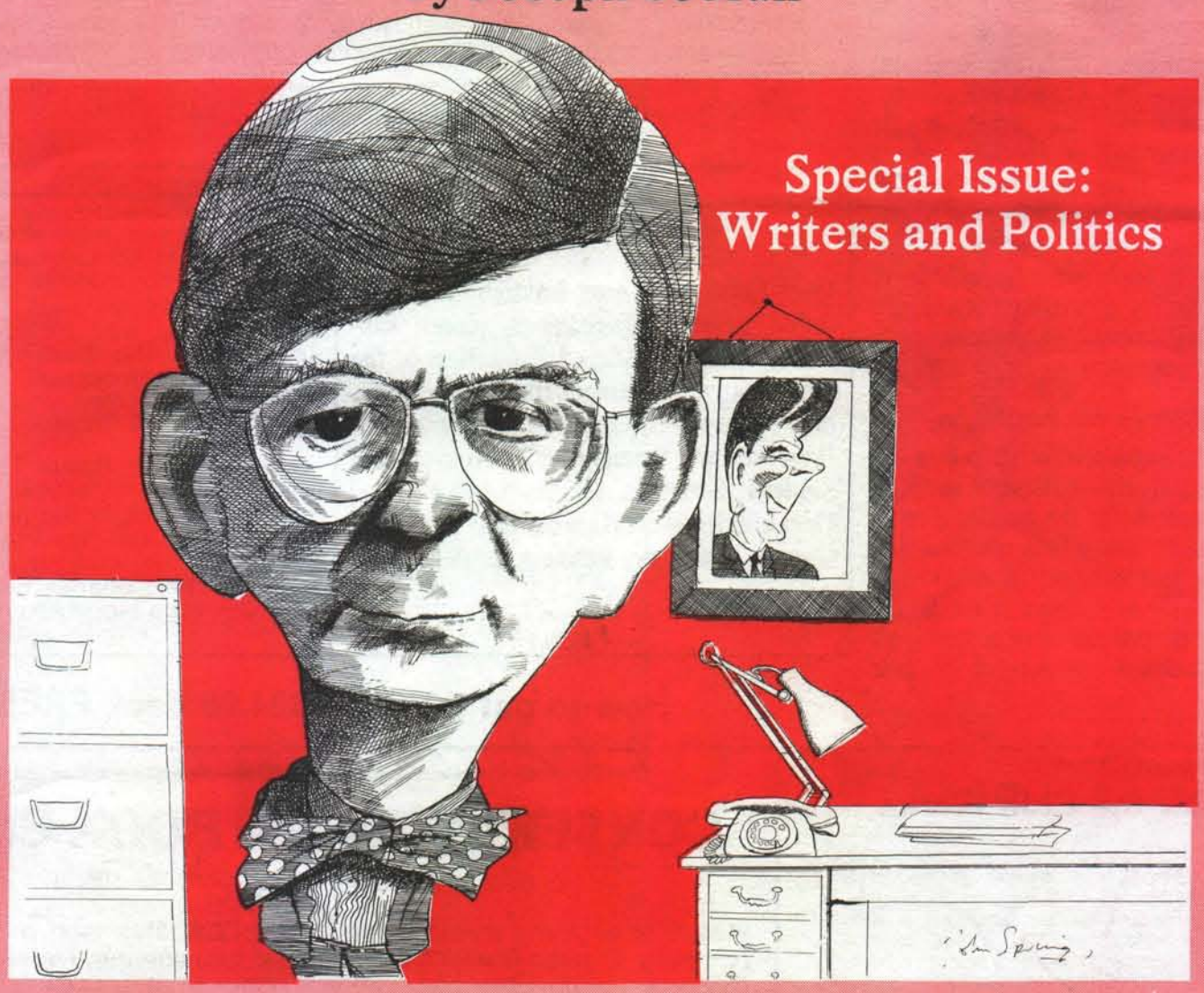
Karl O'Lessker: Reagan's Lousy Press

George Will and the Contemporary Political Conversation
by Joseph Sobran



Special Issue:
Writers and Politics

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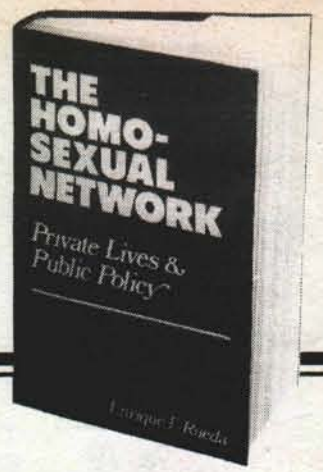

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The American Spectator was founded in 1924 by George Nathan and Truman Newberry over a cheap domestic ale in McSorley's Old Ale House. In 1967 the Saturday Evening Club took it over, rechristening it *The Alternative: An American Spectator*; but by November 1977 the word "alternative" had acquired such an esoteric fragrance that in order to discourage unsolicited manuscripts from florists, beauticians, and other creative types the Club reverted to the magazine's original name. *The American Spectator* is now published monthly at 102 West Sixth Street, Bloomington, Indiana. Second class postage paid at Bloomington, IN, and additional mailing offices.

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THE CONTINUING CRISIS

•It was unbelievably hot again in August and people did what they could to cope. In Honolulu, Hawaii, 645-pound Mike Parteleno entered the World Belly Flop and Cannonball Diving Championship and finished third in the Super Flop category. In Stockton, California, 28-year-old Don King was asphyxiated when the water bed he was filling with water fell on him, and in Bedford, Virginia, an unidentified tax assessor fell into a seven-foot-deep manure pit while inspecting a farm owned by Norville Boone. "Please don't hold this against me when you evaluate my taxes," pleaded Farmer Boone as he hosed the tax man down.

•Beaches weren't much safer. A garbage truck left tire marks on the faces of a couple basking on the sands of West Islip, New York, and California surfers were breaking their necks in record numbers, according to Howard Lee, assistant chief lifeguard for Los Angeles County. At the Spanish holiday resort of Benidorm, some 260 British hooligans were arrested on assorted charges of public drunkenness and vandalism. "The British have become so brutish," said a Dutch boutique owner. "Nobody seems to have taught them how to behave to other people." A Pole would say they were acting like Germans.

•I don't mean to dwell on ethnic stereotypes, but former West German chancellor Helmut Schmidt was back to playing the good German when he joined Gerald Ford and other erstwhile Western leaders for a reunion of sorts at Ford's $2.5 million Colorado home. "Thank God none of us has the power to alter anything," Schmidt laughed, before admitting that "unemployment is not something that can be shrugged off." Alas, he was thinking not of himself, but of Hitler, who "never would have come to power had we not had five to six million unemployed workers." In Nicaragua they know full well what Schmidt had in mind. "We see Reagan as a decomposition of democracy," agriculture minister Jaime Wheelock Roman told the *New York Times*. "It's the conversion of democracy into fascism. It is the rebirth of Hitler in the United States."

•Yet this same Wheelock, according to the *Times*, spoke with "some affection" of former President Jimmy Carter. What gives? Was Wheelock trying to console Mr. Carter, the only eligible luminary not invited to the Ford reunion? But we know from other sources that Carter is a man at peace with himself, Sandinista support or no. Godfrey Sperling, Jr. of the *Christian Science Monitor* learned this when he traveled to Georgia to inquire about the "Center for Policy Studies" Carter is founding. Carter described it for him: "I'll establish over a period of time a center for the resolution of crises or disputes where groups or nations that have major differences between themselves which they can't resolve will come to us." My question is why didn't Sperling ask Carter about where he came up with such an idea. I bet it came from the huge front-page advertisements carried recently in all the major newspapers of India under the headline "Governments invited to solve their problems," wherein the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi declares: "The World Government of the Age of Enlightenment announces its readiness to solve problems of any government—regardless of the magnitude and nature of the problem. . . ." The Maharishi was once spirtual adviser to the Beatles.

•Elvis Presley, as I recall, had no spiritual adviser, yet thousands poured into Memphis on August 15 to join in a candlelight memorial march highlighting "Elvis International Tribute Week" on the sixth anniversary of the King's demise. The City of Memphis Hospital marked the occasion by dedicating its new Elvis Presley Memorial Trauma Center. It's unclear whether the center will serve the victims of music, drugs, or both.

•Compassion could be found in nearly every sector of society, even among the uncaring Reagan folk. Secretary of Agriculture John R. Block and his family lived on food stamps for an entire week, and the experience led Block to conclude a generous five-year grain deal with the Soviets, the U.S. committing itself not to renege on any of the shipments the way Jimmy Carter did in 1980. Belated thanks, Jimmy, for hanging tough. In Cleveland, more than 200 friends of Ohio Congressman Louis Stokes held a rally after his conviction for driving while under the influence. It was subsequently learned that Stokes, chairman of the House ethics committee, had used $4,000 in campaign contributions to cover his lawyers' fees. This was a "legitimate campaign expenditure," explained Stan Brand, counsel to the House. "You can argue that the congressman's ability to exonerate himself through the legal process is going to be important in some respect to his ability to get re-elected." What the hell.

•Three Okmulgee, Oklahoma car dealers were indicted by a federal grand jury for allowing customers to use food stamps to pay for cars, a violation it turns out of the Federal Food Stamp Act, and in Houston, Texas, a kindly landlord named Walter Rode who refused to collect rents from his poor tenants was forced to watch twenty of them receive eviction notices from his building's new owners. "This foreclosure is a victory," said the 43-year-old Rode. "God will provide"—and He'd better provide big: Rode's Mercedes-Benz was also repossessed, and his wife has filed for divorce.

•We can be thankful that at least one good citizen of this formerly commercial republic had the good sense to know that capitalism does not begin with giving. This was 26-year-old Debbie Johnson of Absecon, New Jersey, a private nurse who won free use of a 1983 Pontiac for one year by outlasting 15 opponents in clinging to the new car for more than 93 hours in a showroom. Now I understand why new cars are never advertised without some woman grabbing at them in a rather intimate way. It's just the line of work for Jane Fonda, whose latest project is the selling of exercise clothes under the Jane Fonda Workout label. Fonda is the sort of woman who knows what she wants and doesn't want: leotards cut high over the thigh are out ("they don't support the buttocks"). The traditional cut is in (to "flatter the hips"). So is wearing a belt with her leotard ("to make me feel centered and conscious of my middle"). But above all, she insists that her clothes be union-made and never need ironing. To carry President Reagan's words a step or two further, if it wasn't for women like Fonda, us men would still be the only ones walking around in skin suits.

•Seriously, it's really not a bad world to be alive in. One-hundred-year-old Scott Nearing, the acclaimed leader of the back-to-the-land movement, has returned to the land for good after expiring on August 24 in Harborside, Maine. But as the song says, there's been one child born to carry on—at Harvard, of course. He is Grant Colfax, an 18-year-old incoming freshman raised without electricity, television, or telephone on a backwoods ranch in California's secluded Mendocino County. Colfax is the son of a former sociology professor who escaped the rigors of academic life eleven years ago. On August 17, Robert Wagner, actor and widower, met Pope John Paul II during the Pope's weekly general audience in St. Peter's Square. "I don't know if he knew who I am, but I hope so," Wagner said later, though the confusion may have been all his. In Liverpool, England, there lives 50-year William Bird, a Catholic bobby who's a dead ringer for the Pope. Colleagues have come to call him "Your Holiness," and after work he's taken to dressing in papal robes and playing the role for charity. This is risky business in a place like England, though, to be fair, the same country has just seen the release of the entire Bible in the King James version on floppy disks.

•From now on, let's go easy on the USSR. Where else can a 16-year-old like Andrei Berezhkov plan a future as a comic actor? What other land would issue visas to nine visiting

RET is on assignment, but will return to this slot next month.

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Democratic senators during Congress's summer recess? Who else is conducting a purge of its uniformed police, or paying its living writers the highest compliment—the latest being Georgi Vladimov, just stripped of his Soviet citizenship. What makes Russia so special? According to Soviet cosmonaut Valentin Lebedev writing in *Pravda* about 211 miserable days spent in orbit last year, it's home. He simply could no longer put up with cleaning his teeth with his fingers.

•It took 300 years or so, but America has finally sent a black man, Guion Bluford, Jr., into space, but who scheduled the nighttime launch? President Reagan seemed to spend the entire month in the company of women, not that it made them any happier. They hated his jokes ("he doesn't seem to recognize in himself the mind-set that leads to such blunders," a Susan H. White of Farmington, Connecticut explained), accused him of neglecting his adopted son, and offered no sympathy when it was learned that the President emerged from all his talks with them with further loss of hearing in his right ear. Meanwhile Stanford University's decision to establish a Ronald Reagan presidential library on that campus has provoked outrage from Reagan critics on the faculty. "I can't imagine when the students and faculty get back they are going to like this at all," said political science professor John F. Manley in calling for a delay in the planned ad hoc faculty committee report on the proposed library. Just hold on a minute, Prof. Manley. Let's impeach him first! *—WP*

CORRESPONDENCE

Whose Future?

The article by Stanley Rothman and S. Robert Lichter on "Polling the Future" (*TAS,* August 1983) was said to be part of a larger study of "elites and social change" sponsored by Smith College, Columbia, and George Washington U. The conclusion, based on surveys comparing journalism students and businessmen, is that the "current revival of traditional attitudes will prove to be even more shallow than the modest revival of the 1950s." I don't know what sampling technique was used for the journalists and businessmen surveyed, but its randomness is questioned by the fact that the students were those at Columbia School of Journalism and NYU Business School.

How can an article bottomed in large part on a sampling of two schools in New York City purport to reflect the "Nation's Pulse," your department in which it was published? There are other schools "out there," you know, such as the top journalism schools at Northwestern, Missouri, and Stanford, and a host of business administration schools in the South, West, and Midwest, including the one in your own backyard. If soundings of such schools followed the pattern of the New York schools, I would be convinced. I would also be vastly surprised.

—J.C. Watson
McLean, Virginia

Unsafe at Any Speed

I really hate to create a schism in the ranks of bicycle haters but I must take exception to your suggestion that they be shunted to country lanes ("Pedalphilia," *TAS,* August 1983).

I have learned to hate them because I drive country lanes! If you wonder at their gall when city cycling, you would be amazed to see them in the country. Like abandoned housedogs once they get into the wild, they romp and weave (look, no hands!) down narrow blacktops, at 22mph in 45mph zones. They often move in packs, especially the deadly serious exercise quacks (who can be spotted by the little water bottle on their frames) who know that bounty hunters like me will roar down on lone cyclists, horn blasting and the cross hairs of my Oldsmobile hood ornament centered exactly 8 inches left of their left pedal.

Although dealing with them is more fun in the country than in the city, we both know that they have no right to exist so I believe you really ought to stick to that theme rather than slough them off on us.

—Foster C. Smith
Staff Vice President
Corporate Communications
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In Praise of Bad Writing

Mr. Reid Buckley may be a novelist, but he is certainly not a reader. In his review of Anthony Burgess's *The End of the World News* (*TAS,* August 1983) he failed to recognize the basic structure of the book. Two mediocre dramatic productions (a musical about Trotsky's 1917 visit to New York and a popular biography of Freud) are framed within a third story which is revealed to be actually a third artifact of the end of the world.

Much of the merit of the book centers on the irony of two of the three surviving artifacts of the world being so bad, and the third (the account of the physical end of the world) not being much better. The end of the world is as culturally complete as it is physical. As any Joycean knows, the stereotypical should be spoken of stereotypically, the clumsy clumsily, the inelegant inelegantly. (See Hugh Kenner's "Uncle Charles Principal" in his *Joyce's Voices.*) The irony would be lost if the cultural remains of the world were masterpieces. The world would not have ended culturally.

To accuse Burgess of presenting "bad stuff" and of "bad writing" is to miss most of the book. In *The End of the World News,* Burgess has written of bad stuff in appropriately bad language. That is good writing.

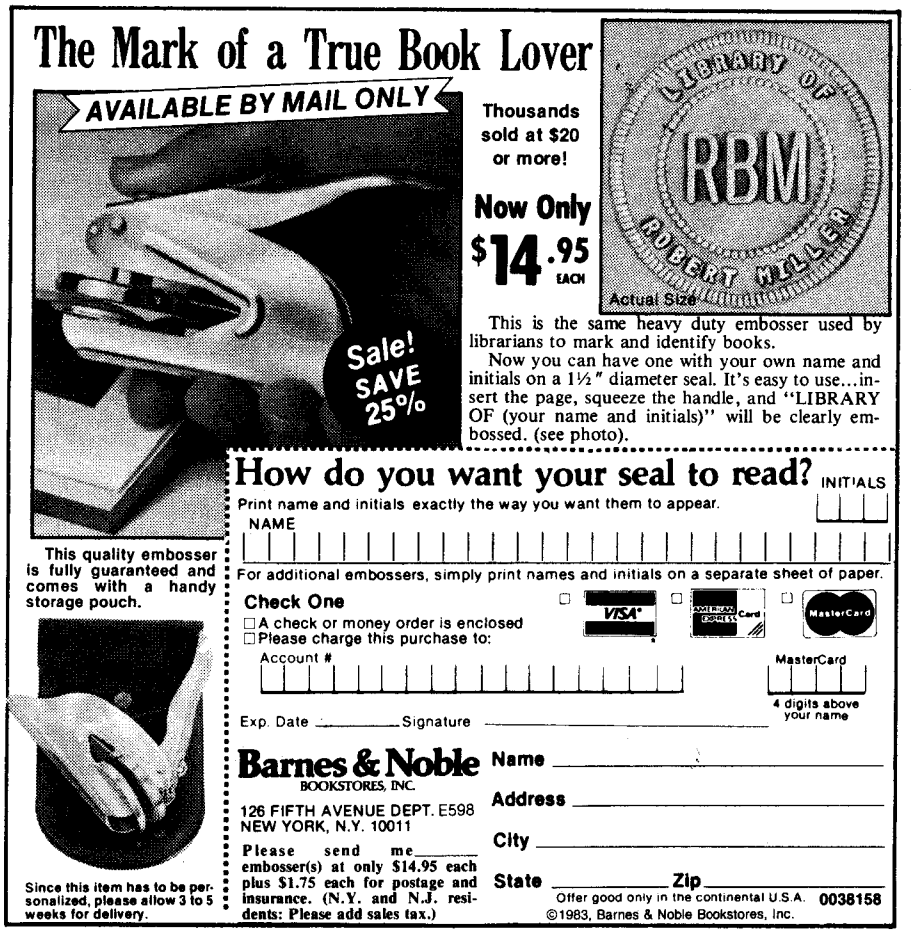
—Dennis Perkinson
Tulsa, Oklahoma

Denis Mack Smith

In the article called "Happy Birthday, Benito" by John Lukacs (*TAS,* August 1983) there appears the statement "contrary to the asseverations of many historians (as in the recent third-rate biography by Denis Mack Smith) . . ."

Mr. Lukacs is entitled to say that he disagrees with the conclusion drawn by Smith and those "many historians," but it seems to me that he is not entitled to call Smith's book "third-rate" unless he furnishes his evidence, a procedure which plainly would have been out of place in his article. His statement therefore becomes what the young people call a cheap shot. I would like to believe that Mr. Lukacs is not as supercilious as he sounds.

But since I'm writing you anyhow —thanks for publishing my favorite magazine. *—Vernon W. Glasser*
Palo Alto, California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EDITORIALS

THE SPOTSWOODIAN PRONUNCIAMENTO

by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

The judiciary's conceptions of free speech continue to fluctuate much as the moods of the late Mussolini continued to fluctuate to the very end. Last month a Kansas City court decided that a TV journalist cannot be suppressed as she reads the news from behind an aging visage prettified according to her tastes rather than to those of her boss, and throughout the journalistic profession the colleagues were gleeful.

Several days prior to this decision, a judge in our nation's capital handed down an opinion on freedom of expression that might well make every commentator in the Republic the timid prey of ambulance chasers. This monstrosity would practically eliminate free expression. Yet the colleagues entered scarcely a peep. Their traditional warnings about how the average Americano fears and hates the Bill of Rights went unuttered. The story was buried.

In a case involving a Marxist professor's allegations of libel against the columnists Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, Chief Judge Spotswood W. Robinson III of the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia made the most blatant assault against the First Amendment in recent memory.

In essence it is his judgment that commentary is not "privileged opinion" and therefore insulated from libel when it "appears without any recitation of the underlying facts" or when the recitation of those underlying facts is in some way unsatisfactory to some lawyer and his client or potential client. A United States District Court judge had earlier dismissed this suit on the grounds that the columnists' remarks were opinion hence protected under the First Amendment. Now Judge Robinson tells us that opinions that "suggest" facts can be considered libelous unless the writer scrupulously presents all opposing facts.

The judgment is, of course, preposterous. Yet as we have discovered in recent years preposterous judgment held by a tiny minority of enemies of freedom can become the law of the land if those enemies of freedom are properly positioned in the Republic, and a seat in the United States judiciary is about the best place from which to slam down tyranny on the lowly Yank. Contrary to Judge Robinson's vision of opinion, all opinion assumes some facts, at least in the mind of the opinion-holder; and to insist that the opinion-holder recite the other fellow's side of the story is to put a very heavy ball and chain on us all.

Judge Robinson's formula is thoroughly inimical to the free society and utterly insensitive to the practicalities of public discourse. His associate, Senior Circuit Judge George E. MacKinnon, revealed the decision's folly in his concurring opinion when he wrote: "Newspaper readers are likely to assume that articles appearing on the op-ed page, especially nationally syndicated editorial comments . . . are intended to express specific opinions. It is also customary for the newspaper to limit the space available for syndicated columnists to express their editorial opinions. This requires that their views be presented in very condensed form. The primary focus of such articles is opinion and they are generally so understood. Under these circumstances, readers of the opinions of nationally syndicated columnists are less likely to be misled by the omission of some facts that persons named in such articles might consider to be necessary."

So much for Judge Robinson, but what are we to make of the colleagues' tight-lipped response? My view is that they are a timorous lot, unconcerned about the First Amendment until they themselves feel the heat. A press mouthing homogenized opinions is fine with them so long as they can keep those opinions under the sway of sentimental liberalism. A more far-sighted course to follow would be to promote the American Civil Liberties Union's position that all expressions about public issues be immune from libel laws. Keep the ambulance chasers out of the editorial pages—they are meek and dreary enough what with all their truckling to suffering homosexuals, Third World revolutionaries, and other frauds I dare not mention lest I rouse from slumber Judge Spotswood W. Robinson III.

Adapted from RET's weekly Washington Post *column syndicated by King Features.*

EAST GERMAN JOCKETTES

When the Hon. Tip O'Neill says, as he did last month, that the Reagan Administration is "telling the middle class that it serves our nation's interest for us to take from the needy and give to the rich," is he really libeling the President until he gives Ron's side of the story? How much time or print is going to have to be accorded Tip to get his message across? How much of his blah are we going to have to endure?

Last month the halls of public comment echoed with complaints that the East German woman athletes in the world track and field championships could hardly be distinguished from the men. Frankly, I was flabbergasted. Had I not heard the grumbling myself I would have been expecting solemn testimonials to East Germany's progressive ways, especially from the feminist orators. What the East Germans have achieved is precisely the goal of recent American public policy, is it not? As I see it the Marxist-Leninists are to be commended. Moreover, shooting up their female discoboli with male hormones to make them hairy and strong is eminently more intelligent than passing legislation that declares sameness between the sexes and threatens legal action against those who do not go along with the delusion.

That has been the American way, or at least the American Liberal's way, for over a decade; and it has led to the most unmanageable follies, a datum that universities, corporations, and the government are beginning to discover. There are fundamental biological differences between the male and the female, and those differences naturally conduce toward differences in taste and behavior. The East Germans have been intelligent and even humane: better it is to face up to these differences and to resort to modern endocrinology than to deny their existence and to call in the feds whenever some wretch follows intellect's imperative and draws sensible distinctions.

Equality of opportunity is a fine and equitable democratic ideal. Passing laws to assure that the ideal becomes reality has not been our folly. Rather, our folly has been to deny reality, to attribute every discrimination to bigotry, even those discriminations that are based on irrefutable differences. This has led to an incalculable growth in litigation and bitterness, to say nothing of the

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costs borne by American society.

All this can be seen in the quixotic struggle to eliminate sex discrimination in college athletic programs, where some discriminations are perfectly justifiable owing to the comparatively lower level of interest manifest by coeds and by sports fans in female sports. Yet the feminists begin by demanding equality of expenditure whether or not there is equality of interest. Then they go beyond equality by demanding that special programs be established to herd bewildered girls into activities that they would rather shun and for good reasons. Who wants to sweat and to develop enormous trapezius muscles?

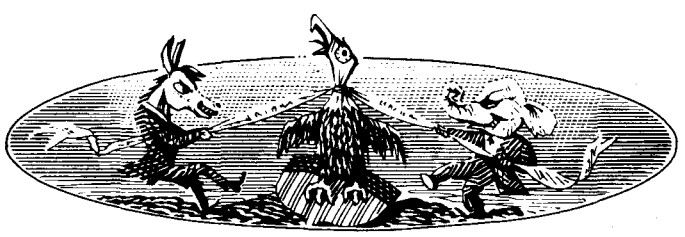
By massaging Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 the feminists have made considerable headway in damaging well-established intercollegiate sports programs. Money-making sports like men's basketball are being asked to subsidize still more financial losers. Despite the empty arenas, feminist basketball players demand the same accommodations as their male counterparts. It is a cruel charade.

Why is there not as much interest in women's sports as in men's? It is argued by some that sports fans turn out in larger numbers to see men because men are faster, stronger, and possibly more ferocious. To this the feminists respond with their usual gallant sophistries and maudlin complaints about thousands of years of male chauvinism, which in this case even kept them out of the ancient Greek games. The first argument is pish-posh; in boxing there is plenty of interest in the lightweights, in motor racing Formula II holds practically as much interest as Formula I for the true enthusiast. The feminist argument is characteristic self-delusion. The reason there is unequal interest in men's and women's competition is that sports is a male enthusiasm.

Large numbers of men fill the stands, and they want to see men. Small numbers of women attend sports events, and neither I nor any woman I know can understand what they go to see. Most women are as unmoved by sports as by commercials for power tools, and that they are so agreeable about their husbands' autumnal fascination with the mayhem of the National Football League is but more evidence of their general tolerance and humanity. Were their husbands to develop the same avidity for, say, women's wrestling, I doubt they would remain so agreeable.

If America is really serious about the feminist dogmas of sexual sameness, all roads lead to East Germany and to the quacks with the hypodermics, but leave me off in Paris. □

CAPITOL IDEAS



THE AD HOC HIKE

by Tom Bethell

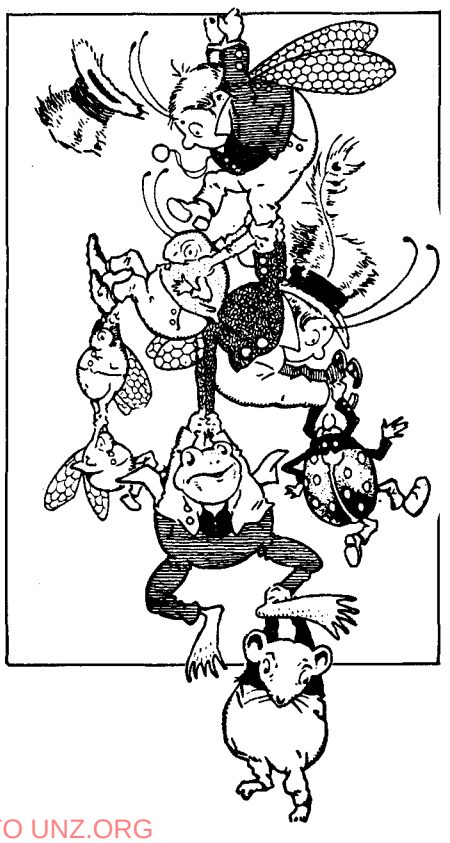
Tomorrow I'll be attending that well-advertised grievance jamboree, the "New Coalition of Conscience" on the Mall, celebrating the twentieth anniversary of Martin Luther King's much publicized dream. Notice the word "coalition." It almost invariably denotes an alliance of left-wingers. The march, or coalition, will be one more opportunity for various leftist groups to get together to hector the nation with abusive and hostile slogans. At the same time we can be sure that the press will behave decorously, with due regard to all the unwritten rules of coverage and discretion. By this I mean it will assist the implicitly socialist goals of the coalition by keeping the spotlight away from all that is explicitly socialist.

What is the "Salvadoran freedom fighter" Ruben Zamora, a left-wing terrorist, doing at an American "jobs, peace and freedom" rally? Why has the U.S. Communist Party newspaper, the *Daily World,* given the march so much pre-event publicity, even telling readers "how to mobilize"? And why the participation of other Communist-front groups such as the National Lawyers' Guild and the U.S. Peace Council? If it were possible, the *Daily World* has been even more enthusiastic about the upcoming march than the *Washington Post.*

Media coverage to date has downplayed the reality of Communist *support* by playing up the false charge of Communist *control.* A few days ago, for example, the *Washington Post* ran a story ("March On Washington Called Communist Front") about a rally led by Rev. Carl McIntyre, who "told 300 flag-waving, hymn-singing followers at the Washington Monument yesterday that next Saturday's march on Washington is a front for international communism." By way of rebuttal, readers were presented with the following: "Donna Brazile, the march's national mobilization director, said McIntyre's charge is the result of 'paranoia,' and that Communists play no role in organizing the march."

Liberals conveniently pretend that Communism is an all or nothing affair; that there are no degrees of it; that one is either "card-carrying" or completely unrelated to it; that the adjective "communistic," although used by Karl Marx, imputes "guilt by association," and that is "McCarthyism." But those who knowingly associate with criminals are liable to prosecution as accessories. The media played up Labor Secretary Ray Donovan's associations, and Frank Sinatra's. Can you imagine what the liberals would say if there were an anti-Communist rally in Washington, with U.S. military and CIA figures "associating" on the platform with Nazis, Ku Klux Klan members, Chilean police, and Argentine generals? Clearly, what the liberals have in mind is not that *association* is innocent, but that *Communism* is.

It is significant that both Communists and anti-Communists agree as to the "communistic" character of contemporary liberalism. The liberals themselves "reject labels" and put on airs as autonomous beings—free spirits. They actually play *up* the fact that the Right sees them as "communistic," so that they can "disavow" the very different (and false) claim that they are Communist controlled. At the same time they play *down* the fact that the Communists see them as communistic, for obvious reasons. The Communists can reasonably be regarded as authoritative in such judgments.



You have to be willfully blind not to see that the march's agenda is appealing to Communists. If implemented, defense spending would be greatly reduced; social spending and income transfer programs would be greatly increased. The idea that jobs can be created by government edict merely transfers a good deal more power to officials in Washington. To anyone who gives the matter a moment's thought it is obvious that the "Coalition of Conscience" would move America further down the road to socialism.

As far as civil rights are concerned, there has been quite a change since King had his dream. The old idea of civil rights was that of a uniformly

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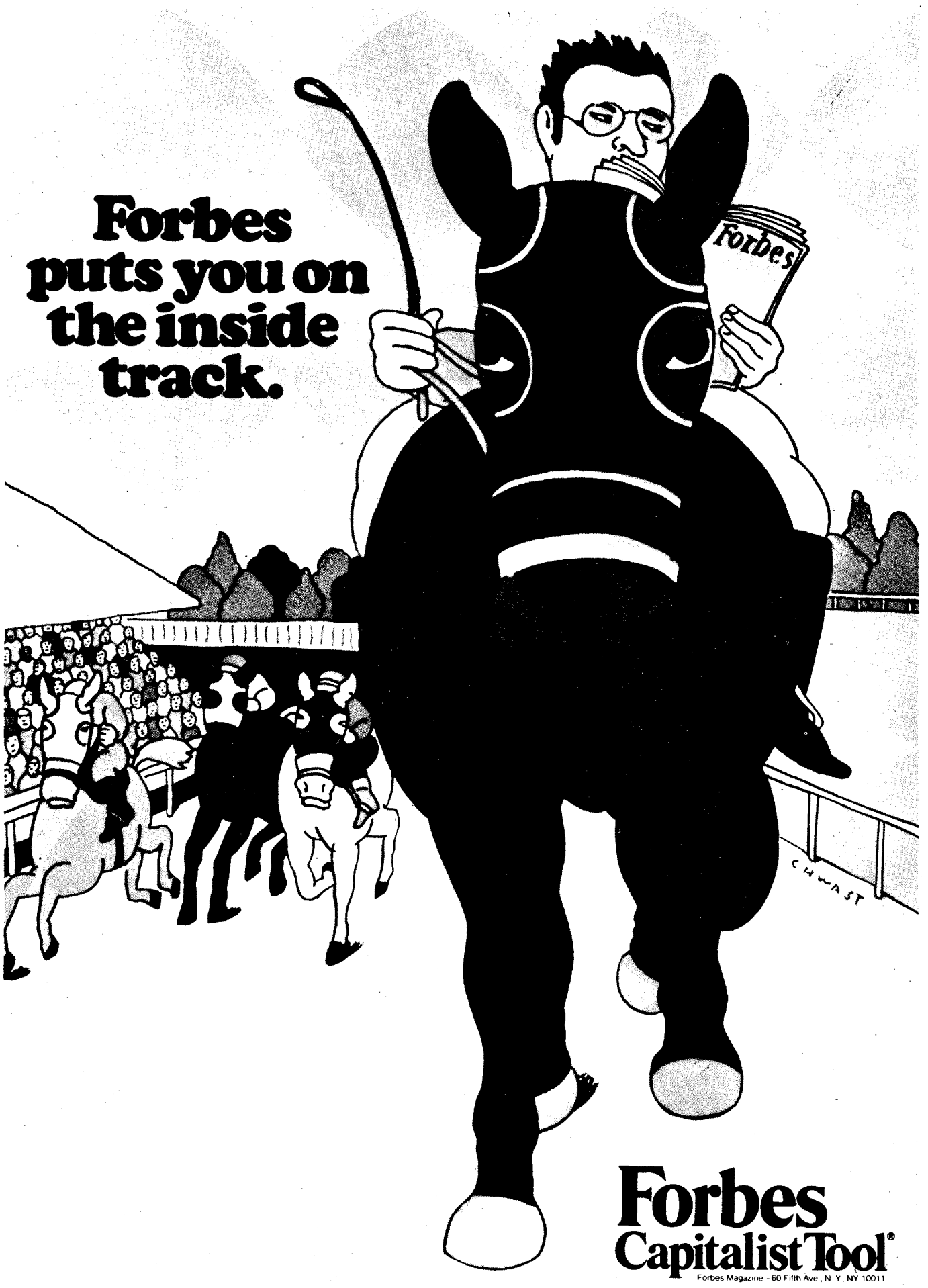
applied limitation of government power; the Bill of Rights is a list of citizens' rights, not government powers. Twenty years ago, state power was being wrongfully used to prevent blacks from registering to vote. The fact that federal power was then used to overcome this wrongful application of state power led to the idea that civil rights were somehow obtained by increasing federal power. The new idea is that civil rights can be "expanded" by increasing government power—for example the power to allocate jobs and remuneration on the basis of membership in one or another privileged group. That is why Hodding Carter is so wrong to say in the *Wall Street Journal* that "today, vast reserves of energy must be directed toward protecting the gains of yesterday." He does not acknowledge, and may not understand, that groups seeking to convert rights into privileges are going way beyond protecting "gains."

Trade unions are already privileged entities. But it is a perennial struggle for them to maintain their privileges in a market economy. Hence their participation in the march. Practically the sole meaningful activity of unions is to act as "barriers to entry"—at the factory gate. Forcibly debarring people from working at the market wage is called the "right to strike," and so it is protected against antitrust prosecution. Unions are organizations superficially antagonistic toward employers, but in fact antagonistic toward nonunion employees. They are perhaps the leading cause of unemployment in America. So what are they doing at a "jobs" rally?



As for blacks, their situation has in some ways deteriorated considerably since 1963. The black illegitimacy rate has soared—it is now 65 percent in D.C.—and the black family has largely broken down. This is a direct result of submitting to the very welfare programs that their corrupt leadership now seeks to expand still further. This leadership, unfortunately, is now completely under the thumb of the white liberal establishment and media—who decide which blacks are "recognized" as leaders, and which are ignored. The liberals, of course, need the black voting bloc in the same way that Lenin needed "the proletariat"; but still, it is amazing that the liberals remain so serenely indifferent to the terrible ghetto havoc that welfare has wrought. It does people the gravest harm to tell them that the state will take care of them, and that they need not work, because they are "deprived"—the victims of society. At one point it looked as though Jesse Jackson might dare to say such things, but he was somehow whipped back into line and today he is nothing but a ludicrous demagogue, with his childish rhyming slogans that are congenial to the media and the Left generally. I gather he will be on a parade tomorrow.

• • •

At Constitution Avenue, I watched the Broad Coalition come rolling by—liberals, progressives, socialists, Trots, and Communists: the Hive on parade. On one or two banners I noticed the words "ad hoc," a phrase which misleadingly emphasizes the accidental nature of such alliances. Most of the marchers were blacks who, one sensed, had dutifully responded to the news media appeals to turn out for the event.

Almost the moment I arrived some strong men came by toting a broadly coalitional banner, as wide as the road: "Communist Workers Party," it read, adding, "Self-Determination for African Americans." I had thrust upon me an incredible amount of communistic literature, replete with articles about the march. The *Guardian,* an "independent radical news-

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weekly," had a twenty-page supplement on march themes. The *Daily World,* the Communist daily, had no less than *ten* articles on the march. The *Socialist Worker,* "paper of the International Socialist Organization," had six such articles. *El Salvador Alert* had two articles, and from this paper I learned that another coalition will be getting together on November 12, this one protesting "U.S. intervention" in Central America. But in November, no doubt, Coretta Scott King will be a peripheral member of the team rather than central figurehead. Finally, the *Workers' Vanguard,* the "Marxist Working Class Biweekly of the Spartacist League of the U.S." had three articles on the day's events.

I noticed also a fair number of those familiar old progressive reliables, tanned and lined white couples, grizzled and bearded, striding forth in sensible ecological walking shoes; veterans, as they say, of solemn sit-ins and many a march. With any luck in the nostalgic sixties they would have seen the inside of a Birmingham jail. She is wearing a beret, he some weird old fishing hat: both are plentifully bemedaled with buttons; both weighed down with rucksacks stuffed no doubt with natural herbs and old copies of *I.F. Stone's Weekly.* Onward they struggle toward the New Dawn, undaunted by old setbacks: the Gulag, the Castro Catastrophe, Mao's murdered millions; relishing once again the outing, the communistic camaraderie, the ad hoc hike; waving familiarly to strangers, so diverse yet so reliably like-minded. Here a cap doffed to Concerned Catholics, there a hearty greeting to Quakers for Gay Civil Rights. Diversity coalescing, barriers crumbling, equality just over the horizon . . .

Ahead lay the Lincoln Memorial, and a familiar array of speakers who just happened to have been assembled for the occasion: Bella Abzug, Gloria Steinem, Harry Belafonte, Cora Weiss, Dick Gregory, Jesse Jackson, Benjamin Hooks, William Wimpisinger; music by Pete Seeger and Peter, Paul, and Mary.

I sat down on the grassy sward beside the Reflecting Pool, amidst numerous marchers who were unpacking their Free Spirit picnic containers and opening up their double six-packer Playmate igloo coolers. Out came the turkey sandwiches, the fried chicken wrapped in tinfoil, the potato salad, the coleslaw, sodas, and brownies. Many of them had Panasonic radios glued to their ears, enjoying the peculiar thrill of hearing about the event they were involved in.

We were so far from the platform that only the occasional word or phrase came wafting our way on the hot afternoon: "hunger in America . . . injustice . . . racism . . . regressive Reagan regime . . . committed to the elimination of Reaganism from the face of the earth . . . fiscal austerity . . . struggle . . . vision . . . aspirations . . . Hitler."

"From across the nation," the *Washington Post* said of the march the next day, "a diverse coalition of 250,000 Americans gathered at the Lincoln Memorial including 700 groups with a wide range of political and social agendas." No fewer than 21 *Washington Post* reporters contributed to this coverage, but the only word in the paper about Communist participation was a quotation from Harry Belafonte repudiating the idea that the march was "the result of some massive Communist conspiracy."

On Saturday on a talk show program, the columnist Jack Germond said he didn't buy the idea that the march was a "commie plot."

Not plot. Coalition. □

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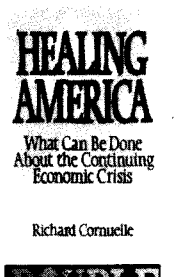

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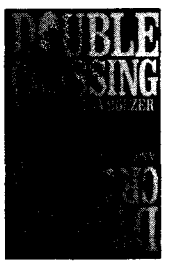

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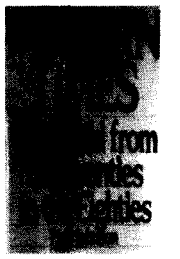

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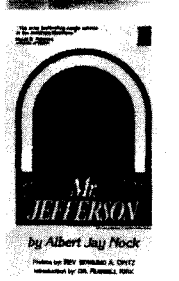

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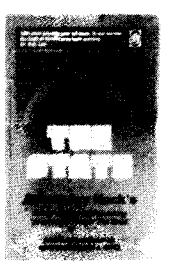

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Joseph Sobran

GEORGE WILL AND THE CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL CONVERSATION

(Properly understood.)

In early July, George Will underwent a sudden role change: all at once he was the object, rather than the transmitter, of moral indignation.

He had admitted having glimpsed the Purloined Briefing Book in the course of helping prepare candidate Ronald Reagan for his 1980 TV debate with Jimmy Carter.

Two weeks later, assorted Democrats, liberals, and Carterites were out-Pecksniffing Pecksniff in demanding that the *Washington Post* drop Will's column. (The *Post* didn't, but the *New York Daily News* did.) Lengthy stories in the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* abounded in phrases like "raises disturbing questions," "relationships between journalists and politicians," and so forth.

You would have thought George Will had been caught in a love nest. Actually, the press was still debating whether the papers themselves—let alone Will's trivial and marginal role in the story—constituted a bona fide scandal. The central fact, the Reagan team's illicit possession of Carter's briefing book, was out in the open for two weeks, and had been known to some for far longer, before anyone thought to make an issue of it. Why was Will retroactively expected to have reacted with electric outrage at the first touch of a document he had described as "excruciatingly boring"? True, stealing a boring document is as criminal as stealing a hot one; but the point is that Will didn't steal it. He was a bystander. Why should he have cared whether a dead horse had been stolen?

Something else was going on, though. The real event was aesthetic, not moral. The real issue, confusedly addressed, was not Will's character, but his persona. There was something incongruous about this conservative scourge of Nixon and Agnew finding himself in the thick of some dubious behind-the-scenes political dealing. It didn't match his aloof and starchy pose as the Pure Observer. It exposed him as a bit of—well, an operator. That was what really hurt him.

As it happened, I had recently roasted Will's latest book, *Statecraft as Soulcraft,* in the pages of *National Review.* I called his position "a toothless, coffee-table Toryism, nicely calculated for liberal consumption."

He wrote me a short, good-humored note about it, with however the complaint that my fierce tone had been "unseemly": "You could have ascribed my bad ideas to my bad thinking rather than my bad motives."

I could have, yes. But I didn't see bad thinking as the real problem. Bad motives—more precisely, bad intentions—had gotten in the way of his normally lucid thinking.

Aristotle, of course, condemned the ad hominem argument long ago, and he has been mindlessly echoed by people who don't stop to consider that Aristotle had a lot to hide: at least one illegitimate child, for instance. In his place, who *wouldn't* want to keep public discussion impersonal?

But the same Aristotle pointed out that rhetoric traffics constantly in motives. The orator has to persuade the audience of his good character. It was as rhetorical performance in this sense, not just as abstract argument, that I found Will's book interesting, and objectionable. *Statecraft as Soulcraft* is the work of an operator wearing the moralist's mask.

Will has always made it a point to establish his distance from other conservatives. He generally quotes them for the purpose only of contrasting them unfavorably with himself, notably on the score of that great motive and motif of today's political rhetoric, compassion. His, he has given us to understand, is the enlightened Toryism of Burke, Disraeli, and Shaftesbury, as opposed to the crass Manchester liberalism of "those who call themselves conservatives [nowadays]." For nowadays, in America, "there are almost no conservatives, properly understood."

In a 1975 column he launched his campaign against "the somewhat narrow and negative social prescriptions of American conservatism." If conservatives don't take "a quickened interest in the problem of poverty," he concluded, "it will be fair to assume that they have at least a mental skin too many, and have inadequate mental material beneath that skin."

In *Soulcraft* he defends the welfare state in principle—"irrefutably," he added in a subsequent column, though none of the reviewers seemed to agree—and complains that American conservatism has become "cranky and recriminatory." He asks: "Can there be conservatism with a kindly face?" He asserts: "A conservative doctrine of the welfare state is required if conservatives are even to be included in the contemporary political conversation."

"The conservatism for which I argue," he goes on, "is a 'European' conservatism. . . . It is the conservatism of Augustine and Aquinas, Shakespeare and Burke, Newman and T.S. Eliot and Thomas Mann." (Are these all the same thing?)

Well, it's a long way from Orange County, certainly. Nobody can accuse George Will of being obsessed with fluoridation or the Trilateral Commission. And he has certainly run with the compassion issue. Almost every policy debate in America tends to turn, alas, sooner rather than later, into a compassion contest, and conservatives, like Cordelia, have a poor

Joseph Sobran is Editor at National Review *and author of* Single Issues (*The Human Life Press*).

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won-lost record in these competitions of humanitarian histrionics.

Whether it is fair to hit them with Lacking Compassion on that account is another matter. It may be that they simply have a different conception of the role of the state, not to mention the constitutional limits of federal authority. But Will doesn't give this possibility a chance. He is talking *about*, not *to*, conservatives, and feels no obligation to answer them to their satisfaction. His relation to them is not of the I-thou variety. He is addressing another audience. To understand what he is up to, we must see the board he is playing on, and watch his moves.

Will asks: "Can there be conservatism with a kindly face?"

The full title of the book is *Statecraft as Soulcraft: What Government Does*. But its thesis is, as Adam Meyerson has noted in these pages, much narrower than the subtitle suggests. Will neither describes the full range of state activity (that would take a fat tome) nor defines the proper and specific purposes of government.

Instead he argues that whenever government acts, its actions have moral implications. It can't really be neutral about "values." It necessarily commits itself to some vision of the good, and thereby helps form the character of its citizens. "Statecraft is, inevitably, soulcraft." Therefore government ought to take into account the moral impact of its policies.

So far, so good. But beyond this point, the book is vague and confused. Because state policy has moral implications, it doesn't follow that the moral is the domain of the state. Nor does Will make quite so vast a claim for it. In fact he insists on what he has nicely called "the primacy of private life." But he never draws a helpful line of demarcation between public and private, and he drifts toward an ever-broader conception of the state's role.

As Will sees it, the American political system was begotten outside "the rich tradition of political philosophy, from Aristotle to Burke. Relatively recently—at the time of Machiavelli and Hobbes—we took a sharp fork in the intellectual road. It is time to retrace our steps, and rethink what we think."

Madison, Will contends, spoke for the Machiavellian tradition when he said that "neither moral nor religious motives can be relied on" against the abuse of power. "It is almost as though," Will comments, "the Founders thought they had devised a system so clever that it would work well even if no one had good motives —even if there was no public-spiritedness." Our Constitution itself was apparently a wrong turn.

Will calls for "a new, respectful rhetoric—respectful, that is, of the better angels of mankind's nature." A rhetoric, that is, of "virtue," which is to say, "good citizenship," including a "willingness to sacrifice private desires for public ends." The welfare state, properly understood, represents an "ethic of common provision" appropriate to this sort of virtue.

All this is questionable on several grounds. The Founders weren't building a new society from scratch, in utopian fashion, but striking a deal among preexisting polities. Madison wasn't being cynical, just realistic, when he said fine motives couldn't be "relied on" to prevent abuses of power. He insisted that republican government "presupposes" more virtue than other kinds of rule, but he had enough sense to know that even where there is a normal degree of virtue, human nature being what it is, institutional restraints are needed. If that isn't conservative sanity, I don't know what is.

For all his emphasis on property rights, Madison was anything but indifferent to virtue. "To suppose that any form of government will secure liberty or happiness without any virtue in the people," he argued in the Virginia ratifying debates in 1788, "is a chimerical idea." These are hardly the accents of Machiavelli and Hobbes. Strange as it may sound to modern ears, Madison, like most conservative thinkers, tended to associate property and character; acquisition requires providence and industry, and possession makes people rooted and responsible. (Tocqueville thought America owed much of its stability to its widespread, though unequal, distribution of property.) The pertinent question to ask ourselves is whether Madison would have thought the modern welfare state, on the evidence, more conducive to civic virtue than the Republic he so lovingly helped to design.

Meyerson has already pointed out that our own recent experience gives grounds for doubting that the size of the public sector is an index of our public-spiritedness. The number of pressure groups defining their own interests as "public ends" these days would surely confirm the Founders' worst apprehensions of rapacious "factions."

Will is echoing contemporary liberalism, not Burkean conservatism, when he reduces the private sector to "private desires" (in the sense of "appetites"). There is no correlation. The public sector has become the great arena of selfishness and greed. It is the triumph of liberal rhetoric to have disguised this truth, while portraying the competition for entitlements and the mass bribery of voters as the politics of "compassion." Meanwhile, it has been all but forgotten that property rights are the great *impediment* to greed, and to the greedy state; for greed consists in the desire for what is not one's own, especially the fruits of others' labor, which today's politics puts up for grabs.

That is why the great task of conservatism today is to restore the limits of the state, not to enlarge its claims. But Will shows no interest in this task. Instead he says, again and again, that we as a nation are "undertaxed." He says little about property rights, and less in their favor.

When he assigns the Founders to the Machiavellian tradition and calls on us to "retrace our steps, and rethink what we think," Will may seem to be throwing down a bold, even quixotic challenge to the status quo. But look again at that curious sentence—in my judgment, the key sentence of *Soulcraft*:

> A conservative doctrine of the welfare state is required if conservatives are even to be included in the contemporary political conversation.

Odd. If Will can say we took a wrong turn as long ago as 1513, or even 1789, why can't other conservatives say we took a wrong turn as recently as 1932? If our entire national tradition is Machiavellian, wouldn't it really be much easier to retrace our steps from the New Deal than from *The Prince*?

Here is where we had best keep a careful eye on the actual framework of Will's rhetorical performance. He speaks from the strongholds of contemporary liberalism, in publishing, broadcasting, and education (*Soulcraft* began its life as the 1981 Godkin Lectures at Harvard), where the "contemporary political conversation" takes place. In terms of contemporaneity, if not political philosophy, 1932 is more *real* than 1513. Within the liberal strongholds, where Will finds the audience he is addressing primarily (and it is anything but a conservative audience), you can say what you like about 1513, as long as you watch what you say about 1932.

Under the circumstances, Will is gingerly in his approach to liberal pieties, but cavalier in his remarks about conservatives, who aren't "included" as he is. It would be one thing if he seriously criticized the principles he says they should abandon; but he doesn't even bother to state those principles carefully. In a book teeming with quotations, he never quotes an important conservative spokesman. The conservative position is represented by three-and-a-half sentences from Reagan campaign speeches.

He knows that a liberal audience will not object, as a conservative audience would, to such 1964-vintage japery as this: "If conservatives do not want to use government power in behalf of their values, why do they waste their time running for office? Have they no value other than hostility to government?" (If Goldwater doesn't *like* the government, why does he want to *run* it?)

Apart from assuming that conservatives are anarchists at heart, Will seems to think that misguided programs, once established, should be administered only by people foolish enough to believe in them. After issuing the grand invitation to all of us to rethink what we think, his practical advice to conservatives boils down to that sage reminder, "You can't turn back the clock."

Will oscillates erratically between two arguments for the status quo. In some moods he adopts the familiar tactic of falling back rhetorically on the simple fact that the welfare state

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exists: it is a "fact," it is a "reality," it is not "reversible," and so forth. This amounts to saying that whatever is, may as well be regarded as right. The virtue (such as it is) of this argument is that it spares one the trouble of specifying genuine norms of politics: approval of what currently obtains can be disguised as resignation to immutable conditions of existence. But why are they immutable? If the human will produced them, it can presumably change them. The refusal to criticize them because of their power is more in the spirit of Machiavelli than of the Great Tradition.

But in other moods, Will ventures a cloudily worded moral justification for welfarism: it represents an "ethic of common provision" or is an aspect of a "just society." He offers no helpful explanation. Instead he moralistically—and inaccurately—contrasts his communitarianism with libertarianism, which he defines as "the doctrine of [sic] maximizing freedom for private appetites."

The best answer to this familiar error is that of the ever-sensible Kenneth Minogue:

> Like many other writers, Marx simply identified individualism with egoism, and a tendency to think in communal terms with altruism. An individualist, however, may well be altruistic to the point of self-abnegation; he merely wishes to choose his own way of acting. Similarly, egoism and selfishness can appear in the most communally minded people. That I should claim the right to own property might mean that I am greedy and wish to do in my fellow men; but it might also mean many other things—such as that I enjoy taking risks, investing, saving money, and so on. And if I should acquire a great deal of property, I may spend it on my own pleasure, or I may set up charitable foundations for art and science, or even (as some millionaires have done) spend it financing socialist revolutions, because such is my pleasure. There is, in other words, no logical relationship whatever between a right on the one hand, and a motive (such as egoism) on the other.

There is no telling, on a given day, whether Will is going to argue from Reality or Morality. In one frolicsome column, though, he recently announced the happy news that Mrs. Will had been confirmed by the Senate as Assistant Secretary of Education, a post that will annually diminish by a reported $68,000 the amount of money available for the gratification of the nation's private appetites. "I herewith disclose that I am sleeping with a government official," he joked amiably. Well, a man's sexual orientation is his own business. But conservatives should at least take note that the woman works for an agency with no constitutional warrant. Even the Supreme Court recognizes the problem of excessive entanglement.

Will, in short, neglects to *specify*. He is "for" government, "for" virtue, "for" somehow promoting virtue through government. But what is government itself for? The conservative, as Michael Oakeshott reminds us, "does not suppose that the office of government is to do nothing," but recognizes governing as "a specific and limited activity." The order of the words is subtly exact in its import: "specific," *then* "limited." Government exists, not to do nothing, but to do good; but good of a certain kind, and no other. *What kind?* That, I take it, is the central question of political philosophy. Mere general approval of the status quo is no answer to it.

Will is echoing contemporary liberalism, not Burkean conservatism, when he reduces the private sector to "private desires."

"Conservatism in the modern age," Will has written, "has one fountainhead: Edmund Burke." In *Soulcraft* he derides with special sarcasm "today's *soi-disant* conservatives who have been so busy praising Burke they have not taken time to read, or at least comprehend, him." He continues: "It is perhaps marvelous that people who preach disdain for government can consider themselves the intellectual descendants of Burke, the author of a celebration of the state. But surely it is peculiar—worse, it is larcenous—for people to expropriate the name 'conservative' while remaining utterly unsympathetic to the central tenet of the greatest modern conservative."

Burke's "celebration of the state" that Will refers to is the (too-) familiar passage in which Burke says the state ought to be regarded as a transcendent partnership among the generations, not as a dissoluble partnership like those of the marketplace. But this is hardly an endorsement of everything states do: in fact it is (rather obviously) a rebuke to a particular state that breaks faith with citizen and alien, repudiates its debts, and confiscates property—namely, the new state Burke sees wreaking havoc in France.

There has been a long controversy as to the essence of "Burkean conservatism," so one wonders how Will can pluck out this particular passage and hold it up as Burke's "central tenet." Burke was a complex thinker, a devious man, and an occasional rather than a systematic writer. Even to talk of his "central tenet" this way is to betray an insensitivity to his wonderfully serpentine style.

Will is right to see the importance of the passage, just as he is right to notice Burke's stress on the key role of "manners" in society. But it is also necessary to weigh such passages against others that add fuller meaning to them. Burke did not mean that the state should regulate manners, but that it depends on them. Civilized government needs a civilized populace.

Quoting isn't learning, and Ellen Wilson scored a shrewd point when she wrote, reviewing *Soulcraft* for the *Wall Street Journal,* that Will's conservatism seems to be "the conservatism of *Bartlett's*." You don't bag Burke for Toryism by quoting a few familiar paragraphs, any more than you bag Shakespeare by citing a few familiar lines from *Troilus and Cressida* ("Take but degree away, untune that string . . .").

Does Will really know Burke? He seems to think Burke can be claimed for the tradition of Tory paternalism; but nothing could be further from the truth. Burke was a Whig of the most rigorous laissez-faire stripe. To understand him fully we have to read not only the familiar quotations from the first half of his *Reflections,* but the passages on economics from the latter half, where he expresses his horror of confiscation and argues that "it is to the property of the citizen . . . that the first and original faith of civil society is pledged." There is nothing Burkean about Will's suggestion that "government's role in the generation of wealth" gives it the right to redistribute wealth as it sees fit (somewhere short of total leveling).

John Springs

Even more vehemently than Madison, Burke holds that the rights of property (including its acquisition) take precedence over any financial needs of the state: "The claim of the citizen is prior in time, paramount in title, superior in equity." The operation of the market, moreover, is "the natural course of things," which it is "pernicious to disturb," even for the purpose of relieving the poor.

It may be fortunate that Will didn't get to know Burke in time for *Soulcraft:* he would have found an irresistible specimen of stony-hearted conservatism to whip for lacking compassion. In 1795, with famine spreading over England, Burke offered his "Thoughts on Scarcity" specifically to oppose government efforts to better the lot of the laboring poor. "To provide for us in our necessities," he wrote, "is not in the power of government."

The whole essay refutes the notion that "government's role in the generation of wealth" somehow creates a limitless sovereignty over the wealth of a nation. Burke understood that government creates necessary conditions for prosperity, but he did not think it a derogation of the state to distinguish between necessary and sufficient conditions. He also disliked humanitarian cant. Speaking of the common laborers who were suffering, he said: "Let compassion be shown in action—the more, the better—according to every man's ability; but let there be no lamentation of their condition."

To Burke the problem even had a theological aspect. He spoke of the duty "manfully to resist the very first idea, speculative or practical, that it is within the competence of government . . . to supply to the poor those necessaries which it has pleased the Divine Providence for a while to withhold from them." He went even further—further by far than Adam Smith. He called "the laws of commerce . . . the laws of Nature, and consequently the laws of God."

Mr. Will, meet Mr. Burke.

We are all impersonators of ourselves, says Ortega y Gasset; and Will has taken his characteristic posture so far in *Statecraft as Soulcraft* that several reviewers have found the book an exercise in "self-

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parody." His persona suffered a wound of a different kind when it transpired that he had seen the "pilfered" briefing book, hadn't told anyone, and, after helping prepare candidate Reagan for the debate, praised the performance as that of a "thoroughbred." Nobody could specify what he had done wrong—there was some huffing about "journalistic ethics"—but somehow everyone knew this wasn't the George Will we had thought we were seeing.

From now on it is going to be harder for Will to let on that he is to other conservatives as "Masterpiece Theater" is to "Dallas," and nearly impossible for him to climb back onto the moral pedestal from which he was wont to address the public. This is all to the good. He is, after all, a really excellent columnist, because he has one extraordinary gift: he can think straight. He can reduce an issue to its essentials.

He fails to do this only when he is preoccupied with making an impression of himself on the reader. His pseudo-Burkean affectations, his somewhat promiscuous quoting, his more-caring-than-thou postures—these are signs of distraction. He should write, as it were, anonymously; as if the point were to make the reader remember the argument and forget the author. "Read over your compositions," Dr. Johnson recalled a tutor instructing one of his pupils, "and whenever you meet with a passage which you think particularly fine, strike it out."

"Ethic of common provision," "contemporary political conversation," "the central tenet of the greatest modern conservative"—one has the horrible suspicion that in these phrases Will thinks he is being "particularly fine." Too bad. The pundit trade is already overstocked with what the editor of this journal has called "moral hams"; but there is no danger of a surplus of thinkers like Will in peak form. His real face is much handsomer than his mask. □

Stephen Miller

GUTTER ROUSSEAUISTS

Political obsessions of the Writing Class.

The United States, we are often told, is a predominantly commercial nation whose citizens are so preoccupied with getting on in the world—so driven by materialism and consumerism—that they neglect high culture, scorning art, music, and literature as unmanly. In recent years, as if to make amends for American philistinism, many leading American businessmen have turned to praising the arts effusively. The chairman of the board of Philip Morris, for example, quoted approvingly an art historian's remark that "perhaps we can look to the arts . . . to assure us of a national life that has more joy, more human fulfillment, and more ordered grace." So eager are men of affairs—politicians, lawyers, businessmen, bankers—to appear untainted by Babbittry that praising the arts has become commonplace, and even good politics.

Yet there are some sour voices among the chorus. These observers complain about the vulgarization and trivialization of the arts—the vulgarity of blockbuster art exhibitions, the triviality inherent in the awarding of grants to popular culture enthusiasts. The Triumph of the Arts, these critics suggest, has often meant the triumph of second-rate art that is shoddy, mindless, and—even worse—infected by anti-Americanism.

According to some observers, anti-Americanism has been especially evident in the literary world. At a recent conference on "Our Country and Our Culture,"* Joseph Epstein stated that "the contemporary literary scene is rife with writers whose chief stock in the trade of ideas is a crude anti-Americanism." In *Writers and Revolution: The Fatal Lure of Action* (1975), Renee Winegarten goes further, arguing that writers have been seduced by the example of the French Revolution. "Revolution," she says, "has fascinated and haunted creative writers—poets, novelists, dramatists, essayists—for more than two hundred years."

Winegarten's charge is puzzling. Few major nineteenth- and twentieth-century writers have been revolutionaries, or even sympathetic to revolution. Of the major English novelists and poets of the last 200 years, we cannot find a single revolutionary among them. Even among Continental writers, the revolutionary pickings are slim: Sartre, Brecht, and Aragon on the Left; Céline (and Ezra Pound) on the Right. Like many a left-leaning writer, Sartre and Brecht only played at being Communists; revolutions were good for others, but they didn't want to subject themselves to revolutionary discipline. ("O Lord," Augustine said, "make me chaste, but not yet.") Even among recent novelists or poets few have preached revolution—the major exceptions being the Chilean Pablo Neruda and Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Winegarten herself could affix the label "revolutionary" to a mere handful of contemporary writers. While it is true that many novelists have been fascinated by the revolutionary character, fascination does not mean approval: those revolutionaries who inhabit the pages of Conrad, Dostoevsky, and Turgenev are for the most part distasteful, if not loathsome.

Where Winegarten goes astray is to combine novelists, poets, and dramatists with essayists. Essayists, by which I mean writers of nonfiction (academic sociologists and political scientists, magazine journalists, writers for the daily press), serve her argument much better. Writers of nonfiction—let us call them men of letters—frequently have been half in love with revolutionary change. To put it another way, nonfiction writers often are strong advocates of changing society, looking to the future to usher in a world more attractive, to borrow a phrase from Irving Howe. Novelists and poets, on the other hand, usually regard the future with suspicion. They are haunted by loss, decay. The future will bring either more of the same—human nature being incapable of change—or worse. "The beggars have changed places," wrote Yeats, "but the lash goes on."

French men of letters, however, have been more disposed to welcome

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revolutionary change than their English counterparts, perhaps because the French Revolution looms so large in their minds. Although the revolution was not caused by men of letters, their political tracts played an important part in turning public opinion against the monarchy. After the downfall of the Old Regime, it no doubt dawned on many French writers that they had worked wonders, and they began to regard themselves as a major force in French politics. Most French men of letters still drink at the fountain of the French Revolution. Like Voltaire who spoke of the need to *écraser l'infame*, they continue to attack all that smacks of prejudice and superstition in the hope of remaking society. Of course, not all the French have been advocates of radical change (even Voltaire was no out-and-out revolutionary), but Sartre—the Sartre who continually excoriated the bourgeoisie—is a more typical French man of letters than, say, Raymond Aron, who seems closer to the British tradition. Whereas in France men of letters generally see themselves as adversaries to those in power, their English counterparts typically have regarded themselves as advisers, exploring possibilities for reform.

Yet it is instructive to note that the men of letters who most influenced French public opinion during the last days of the Old Regime were not in the distinguished mold of Voltaire, Diderot, or D'Alembert. Rather, as Robert Darnton points out in *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime*,† they were the scribes of Grub Street. It was their pamphlets, libels, and *chroniques scandaleuses* that created the image of an *ancien régime* rotten to the core, bringing about "a political mythology that made many Frenchmen feel they were slaves—even though the Bastille was almost empty by 1789." The work of these "gutter Rousseauists," as Darnton calls them, was crude, inaccurate, and simplistic, but its effect was deadly.

Although clandestine publishing of this kind always had existed in France, in the years before the Revolution the gutters simply overflowed. For the first time in history, it was possible to be a writer without being independently wealthy or subservient to a patron. Or so it seemed to thousands of young Frenchmen. "How many youths," Darnton says, "must have dreamt of joining the initiates, of lecturing monarchs, rescuing outraged innocence, and ruling the republic of letters from the Academie Française or a chateau like Ferney." Few had the talent and shrewdness to pursue respectable careers. Most ended up on Grub Street, writing pornography, spying for the police, and composing pamphlets that denounced a society that had humiliated and corrupted them.

†Harvard University Press, $16.95.

Contemporary American practitioners of what we call adversary journalism are in many respects descendants of this French literary underground. True, contemporary journalists don't lie, or at least they are usually more careful with their evidence. What both groups have in common is a distrust of those in power and a desire to unmask them—to find the "inside story" that will reveal those in power as corrupt, dishonest, or—more commonly nowadays—quarrelsome, vacillating, confused, incompetent, lazy, even stupid. Some contemporary journalists prefer to practice what Irving Kristol calls advisory journalism—spelling out the difficult policy choices politicians face rather than trying to unmask politicians—but professional ambition and rewards usually push journalists in the direction of adversary journalism.

One might say, so what? After all, American journalists have been practicing adversary journalism since colonial times, but democracy has survived. Although the American public likes to think the worst of those it elects to office, it has not lost faith in representative government. Good men still run for office. While there are surely too many tales of government corruption and incompetence, some of these do point to real abuses of power. And the knowledge that the press is out to get them keeps many a politician honest.

If adversary journalism does have its uses, then why is it such a problem today? For one thing, the growth of the federal government and of modern technology has made Washington the center of attention. If we include TV journalism, more journalists than ever are covering Washington politics, and national politicians are in the public eye as never before. Meanwhile, the sunshine laws passed in the mid-seventies have made it difficult for congressmen to deliberate in secret—to hide from the press long enough to think about an issue before making statements about it. Finally, the growth of the federal government has left the Washington politician overwhelmed by the many issues he is expected to know something about.

Journalists are suckers for any politician who shows the least bit of interest in intellectual matters.

These developments have put politicians on the defensive. The Washington politician now lives in a glass house and so is engaged in an unequal battle with the journalist. He has litle room to maneuver and a tremendous amount in which to slip up. If he talks too little to the press, he appears evasive or vapid. If he says too much, he is in danger of cutting off all possibility of compromise on an issue—in danger of contradicting former statements, in danger of appearing confused, having talked at length about an issue he may not know enough about.

The politician thus is more in danger of appearing the fool than the knave. Journalists, it must be kept in mind, are men of letters. Many aspire to write something more ambitious than daily news stories—novels or works of history or analyses of contemporary politics. As men of letters, they tend to hold in highest esteem those who write books—especially academics who shuttle between major universities and Washington—the implication being that if such men were governing, the United States would be in better shape. Theodore Draper has rightly pointed out that Henry Kissinger maintains his high standing with the press primarily because he is regarded as a distinguished man of letters. Journalists are suckers for any politician who shows the least bit of interest in intellectual matters.

What these inside scoops on the incompetence of our Washington politicians serve to do is to sow dissatisfaction with representative government, making it more likely for Americans to prefer direct democracy. According to our adversary journalists, each of the last five American Presidents has been incompetent: Johnson a megalomaniac, Nixon erratic and vindictive, Ford stupid, Carter obsessed with detail, and Reagan lazy and confused. (Foreign leaders, by contrast, are treated with much greater respect. Is it because they are thought to be more cultured, better educated?) Insofar as foreign governments depend on the American press for an understanding of American politics, such stories abet a crisis of confidence—leading even close allies to wonder whether the United States is fit to exercise world leadership.

The problem is not that America's adversary journalists are revolutionary or anti-American. Rather, it is their membership in what might be termed the Writing Class, where condescension toward—if not contempt for—the politician is the norm. I realize such a generalization is risky. After all, the Writing Class comprises a wide variety of people, from Marxist academics to apolitical novelists and poets. But whatever their politics, almost all look down on the politician. In a lecture on "Poets and Politicians," Stanley Kunitz said that poets "simply distrust anybody who makes a vocation out of the pursuit of power." Kunitz was implying that the politician is the opposite of the poet; a conformist, a slave to public opinion, someone who uses

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words to hide rather than to clarify—a master of dissimulation and obfuscation. Robert Lowell, in "July in Washington," pointed to something else:

> The elect, the elected . . . they come here
> bright as dimes,
> and die dishevelled and soft.

Rarely do writers speak of the poor deluded fools in their own midst—the thousands of aspiring writers who, ambitious of fame if not power, come "bright as dimes" to countless creative-writing classes pandering to their delusion. These would-be poets, essayists, and novelists dream of being praised for their work, but most end up unknown if not dishevelled.

Of course the best artists—especially the best novelists and poets—are not condescending to politicians, and these writers often puncture the complacency of the arts world. But they also generally lack the influence of adversary journalists, periodical writers, book reviewers, and essayists. It was the hacks of the Old Regime, not the stars of the Enlightenment, who were instrumental in undermining support for the Old Regime. Although the arts may bring more grace, joy, and fulfillment to American life, their triumph—their vast expansion—may also result in vast numbers of dissatisfied American artists and writers falling, as Darnton says of the literary underground of the Old Regime, "easy prey to the psychology of failure—a vicious combination of hatred of the system and hatred of the self." It is unlikely that the vast expansion of the arts in the United States will lead more Americans to appreciate, in George Will's words, "the dignity of the political vocation and the grandeur of its responsibilities." □

Matthew Stevenson

THE STATE OF AMERICA'S NEWSPAPERS

Going the way of the railroads.

In the winter of 1981-82, as part of my job as one of the directors of a newspaper syndicate, I visited the offices of more than fifty newspapers. The group I was representing proposed to edit magazine articles, transmit them over high-speed wires, and sell them to newspaper editors. I was selected to go on the road to find the appropriate editors and sell them the service.

"The road" turned out to be a succession of airports and bus and railroad stations—in addition to newspaper waiting rooms. The size of the papers varied from the *Juneau Empire* (circulation 6,650) to the *Chicago Tribune* (circulation 758,255), although I mostly concentrated on the one hundred largest dailies, as listed in *Editor & Publisher Yearbook*. In five months of travel, I got as far north and west as the *Anchorage Times* and *Anchorage Daily News*; as far south as the *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*; and as far east as the *Providence Journal*. I met with editors of every rank and description, and most were extremely generous with their time, if not with their purchases. Though the *Philadelphia Bulletin* was well known to be in financial difficulties, nearly all the top editors were happy to meet with me. At the *Allentown Morning Call*, I made my pitch at eleven-thirty at night. Only in Kansas City was I shown the door before my presentation was over.

The experience amounted to an education in American newspapers. I had worked in magazines and knew newspapers, aside from those I read, only by reputation. I started on the road with few expectations, but came to the conclusion that not all was well with the country's dailies, whatever their reputations. Hemingway is no longer on the staff of the *Kansas City Star*; the *New York Herald Tribune* isn't that city's second newspaper—Rupert Murdoch's *Post* is; and Carl Bernstein now works in television. But memories die hard.

My education began in Dallas with visits to the *Morning News*, the self-proclaimed leading newspaper of the Southwest, and the *Times Herald*, a colonial holding in the Times Mirror empire. In both cases I met with various editors—managing, news, features—and explained what the syndicate was trying to do and what articles it could provide. But quickly I learned that the last thing on any editor's mind—in Dallas or elsewhere—is news. Modern newsrooms, it should be noted, purr with the clickity-clack efficiency of word processors. The leitmotif is no longer the manual typewriter. Further, the job of editor or assistant editor, only in ceremonial ways, is to edit. Editors attend budget meetings, go over personnel issues, meet with the unions, or discuss plans for a new building. Rarely do they dispatch young reporters to fires or write editorials denouncing corrupt officials as thieves or rogues. Today's editors, by design, are middle management, and they preside over the news almost by remote control. They spend their days returning phone calls, and going to lunch, and as though by magic, the paper appears the next morning on the newsstand. Nevertheless, for all this absentee management, there is a cost. →

Matthew Stevenson writes for a number of national magazines. He wishes to acknowledge the assistance of the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research in the preparation of this article.

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For one thing, American newspapers suffer from the same blandness that has overtaken hotel chains and fast-food restaurants. Nearly all the papers look alike. After a while, I wondered if there wasn't some secret covenant among owners to give papers uniformity, so that the untrained eye can't tell the *Dallas Morning News* and the *Detroit News* apart. Even more alarming, most papers actually read the same. What is supposed to be news in Denver is about what it's supposed to be in Seattle except for a few school-board election stories. Besides which, outside of a few big-city dailies, there is the added homogenization of wire copy. Moving from city to city on the same day, I was often able to track a wire story from one paper to another, fostering the illusion that dispatches are still tossed from fast-moving trains and then printed in the next edition.

Yet most newspapers are doing well financially. Before the recent publishers' convention in New York, James Hoge, publisher of the *Chicago Sun-Times,* said: "Newspapering is a big and diverse industry. One part of it, the afternoon metros in the older cities, can get in trouble, but it was never as bad as it was painted." Translated, this means that despite the wreckage of such flagships as the *Philadelphia Bulletin,* the convoy keeps sailing and making lots of money.

Newspapers now have 62.4 million daily readers, up a million from last year. In 1980 there were 182 more Sunday papers than there were a decade earlier. Even medium-sized dailies are bloated with advertisements and supplements for consumers every day of the week. Such large papers as the *Washington Post* are thicker in newsprint on weekdays than, say, the London papers are on Sunday.

The reason for this economic well-being, not surprisingly, is that while there are 1,710 dailies in the United States, only 24 cities have newspapers competing for advertisers and readership. The rest are, in the words of A.J. Liebling, "one-paper towns," and the natural tendency in such places is to put out a paper inoffensive to the greatest possible number of readers. When Liebling was writing "The Wayward Pressman" for the *New Yorker* in the forties, fifties, and early sixties, he was despairing because there were only seven competing newspapers left in New York and because in 1927 there were 502 cities with competition. Hence, as he watched the number of competitive newspapers in cities drop to around 60 in 1963, he observed that "as the number of cities in the United States with single newspaper ownership increases, the news becomes increasingly nonessential to the newspapers." In Liebling's day, the victor was usually an eccentric millionaire, who with his monopoly powers could inflict on the readership whatever version of the truth the traffic might bear. Today the monopolists are anything but eccentric, and the papers' mission is to serve as quasi-public utilities that strive to balance service and monopoly profits. It might be called the triumph of the bland, and it has done for newspapers what Howard Johnson did for home cooking.

The image of a monopoly press was brought home to me by the omnipresence of the large newspaper chains. Chains crisscross the landscape; despite all the clichés describing the newspaper as the stronghold of independence, a paper owned by an individual is the exception.* In effect, American cities are divided up among the chains much the way major league baseball distributes franchises in the minor leagues. After a while, I started to think of the

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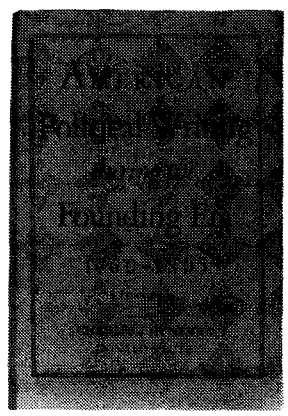

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cities I was calling on only in terms of their hierarchical affiliations. Seattle is divided between Hearst (the *Post-Intelligencer*) and Knight-Ridder (which owns forty-nine percent of the *Times*). Denver is Times-Mirror versus Scripps Howard more than it is a battle between the *Denver Post* and the *Rocky Mountain News,* which are warriors in the symbolic way of medieval horsemen. Cleveland, Newark, and New Orleans are the sole possession of Newhouse. Gannett is boss in Rochester, Wilmington, and Oakland, to name but a few. Knight-Ridder has papers in Aberdeen (SD), Akron, Boca Raton, Boulder, Bradenton (FL), Charlotte, Columbus (GA), Detroit, Duluth, Fort Wayne, Gary, Grand Forks (ND), New York, Lexington, Long Beach (CA), Macon, Miami, Pasadena, Philadelphia, San Jose, St. Paul, State College (PA), Tallahassee, and Walla Walla. A map of newspaper holdings in the United States would resemble one showing the European holdings of the Hohenzollerns, Wittelsbachs, Wettins, and Habsburgs.

In terms of ownership, newspapers resemble not only sixteenth-century Europe but also the railroads after World War II—just before their decline. I came on this analogy while visiting the *Bulletin* in Philadelphia shortly before it folded. The offices of the top editors looked down on the freight yards that once belonged to the Pennsylvania Railroad. Now they are part of Conrail, what remains of the Penn-Central and other failed railroad mergers. Talking to the editors about the *Bulletin*'s chances and looking out the window at switchers shunting freight cars in the yards, I couldn't help but draw a parallel between the decline and fall of American railroads and the present condition of U.S. newspapers. Like the railroads, newspapers flourished during and after the industrial revolution; like the railroads, they drew customers in and about American cities; and, like the railroads after the war, they are going through a period of intense consolidation. In the fifties and sixties, even though the pre-eminence of the airplane was about to supplant trains, railroads made record profits. Similarly, newspapers today, despite the advent of a host of mediums with which to distribute news, are reporting record earnings. Who is to say that Gannett today with its 88 papers might not be the Penn-Central of tomorrow?

Because of their levels of concentration, the newspapers might well be a regulated industry, even though, officially, there is no Interstate Commerce Commission to adjust rates and apportion routes. Nearly 98 percent of all American cities and towns are in the hands of a monopoly. In turn, few of these monopolists compete with one another. The top ten newspaper publishers control 253 papers, which account for nearly 24 million readers —almost half of those in the United States. But it is as rare to find Knight-Ridder competing with Newhouse as it was, after a while, to find a robber baron who objected to sitting down with the competition and a map to figure out how both could make some money.

The irony of the newspaper business is that while some of the large chains are making, for them, record profits—in 1981 Gannett's net profit was $172 million—before the law they qualify as neediest cases. Bad enough that two-paper towns are vanishing like trolley systems; worse is that where vestiges of competition remain, the law has sanctioned newspaper oligopolies to ensure that one paper doesn't spoil the profits of another.

The newspaper as endangered species was an idea that gained currency during the Nixon Administration. Informal market-sharing arrangements had actually been around since 1933, when the *Albuquerque Tribune* and *Journal* merged operations, but a 1969 Supreme Court ruling threatened to overturn these divisions of the spoils. The publishers responded with intensive lobbying efforts, and the result was the Newspaper Preservation Act, which allows competitors—subject to approval from the Attorney General —to merge business, circulation, and mechanical departments while keeping editorial matters separate. The justification to the public and to the antitrust authorities was that economies of scale in business and advertising would allow weaker papers to continue publishing and thus provide at least a measure of competition—if only in the news columns. Time and again in my travels I found allegedly competing newspapers in the same building, their staffs separated either by an office partition or a floor—hardly the stuff of which newspaper wars are made.

Twenty-three cities now have both their papers run by some form of a Joint Operating Agreement (JOA). A twenty-fourth, Seattle, was approved by the Justice Department but subsequently blocked by a federal judge. The largest city on the list is San Francisco, where the relationship, as stated by *Editor & Publisher Yearbook,* is the following:

> The San Francisco Examiner and San Francisco Chronicle are independent and competitive newspapers, published by separate corporations. The San Francisco Sunday Examiner & Chronicle is produced jointly by the Hearst Corporation and the Chronicle Publishing Co., and includes sections independently edited by the San Francisco Chronicle. San Francisco Newspaper agency . . . is agent for the Examiner, the Chronicle and the Sunday Examiner & Chronicle, and operates their advertising, circulation, accounting and mechanical departments.

For good reason does Liebling repeatedly describe *Editor & Publisher Yearbook* as the "frightened handmaiden of the newspaper industry"; the word "independent" appears three times in the note on the JOA.

Other cities with JOAs are El Paso, Tucson, Tulsa, Chattanooga, Birmingham, Knoxville, Columbus, Pittsburgh, Nashville, and Miami. The smallest city on the list is Franklin-Oil-City, Pa., population 24,000. Lest anyone think JOAs are solely to benefit the struggling independent publisher trying to compete with the chains, it should be noted that Newhouse is party to two such agreements, Hearst two, Gannett six, Knight-Ridder two, and Scripps seven.

I saw a JOA in the making in Seattle, where the *Times,* the all-day paper forty-nine percent owned by Knight-Ridder, and the *Post-Intelligencer,* the Hearst paper that comes out mornings, were proposing to join business forces. If the agreement is approved, the *Times* will drop some of its early-morning editions to give the *Post-Intelligencer* a break in the morning, while Hearst will drop its Sunday edition, except for one of those independently edited inserts. For all practical purposes the *Times* will become the dominant paper in the city, because the Hearst paper, which is losing money, is in no position to dictate terms. It may even

*One reason family newspapers are often sold to the chains is the inheritance tax imposed on heirs. Often these estate taxes are based on the newspaper's market value, and as communication companies often sell at high price/earnings multiples, this value can be greater than that of the paper. Hence the heirs have no choice but to sell—usually to one of the chains.

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have to give up its building, a fixture on the Seattle skyline with its globe of the world standing proudly on the roof.

In arguing for the agreement, Hearst, which last year is estimated to have made $120 million, said that without it they would have to close the *Post-Intelligencer* or, worse, sell it to someone like Rupert Murdoch. The *Times* made the familiar plea to save competition, even though approval will leave the city—save for the intrusions of some suburban dailies—with mornings, afternoons, and Sundays as neatly carved up as the freight markets that fell in between the railroads of Mr. Vanderbilt and Mr. Gould.

According to the *New York Times,* which recently quoted "industry analysts," "most cities will only support one newspaper." The latest evidence supports this conclusion. Time Inc. poured an estimated $60 million into the *Washington Star* and even that couldn't save it. Both the *Bulletin* and the *Cleveland Press* picked up readers during their last days, but it wasn't enough. Without a majority of readers—at least in the particular market you are aiming for—and consequently of advertisers, most owners, more than ever before, are content to pack it in. But what the *Times* means when it says cities will support only one paper is that advertisers will only flock to the leading daily: New York readers used to support fourteen papers.

Still, the reason for these failures goes beyond garnering advertisers. Odd as it may seem, many owners don't know why they want to own a newspaper, beyond the obvious reason of making money. Consider: Time Inc. bought the *Washington Star* because it wanted a "presence" in the capital; the Cowles Media Company bought the *Buffalo Courier-Express* because the paper had the only cable television franchise in the city. Once they lost their ability to sell advertising, they became expendable. Like passengers watching their favorite trains being pulled from service, the readers would have to make do with something else.

In my rounds I visited several of the papers that subsequently foundered. I had especially admired the editors of the *Minneapolis Star* and the *Bulletin* and wondered what they and all their reporters would do. For the crew, newspapers are a succession of Titanics. For the officers, safely removed from the action in their big glass corporate headquarters, newspapers are part of a fleet and, unfortunately, one occasionally hits an iceberg of low profitability. Little flags are then removed from the chains' strategic maps.

I can't help thinking that many of these losses could have been avoided. It wasn't just the drop in advertising revenues that doomed them. Many papers, including a host of those still publishing, have lost touch with their readers. Monopoly journalism is at best impersonal, and readers are now thought of in such terms as "market clusters," to use the phrase of *USA Today.* Whether it was always thus is difficult for me to gauge, but at least in the period that Liebling describes, newspapers stood for something—if only the bizarre notions of the owner. But now that the eccentric individual proprietor is gone, except in a few rare instances, newspapers are run on the same principles that guide any other monopoly industry.

Few of the papers I visited were willing to spend money on improving the quality of their coverage. Managing editors, in particular, are terrified of money. None that I met liked to talk about it, especially if they had to part with some for a good story. The *Rocky Mountain News* pays $65 for outside contributions. Period. No exceptions, even if the story is several thousand words long. An editor in Columbus once told me that she wasn't interested "in any story that costs more than $125." "I'll get back to you on that" was how most financial discussions abruptly ended, as though the editor had to poll the shareholders before spending $125.

I soon learned that what *does* interest editors is changing jobs. There are probably few professions whose work force is as mobile as that of newspapers. People I knew at the beginning of my travels had vanished by the end. Some of this movement, of course, was inside a chain. The Hearst chain has the habit of moving its talented young editors from city to city. But a lot of job switching was "intermural" and editors would frequently ask me in confidence, since I was traveling around, if I "knew of any openings in San Jose."

This peripatetic tendency was summed up to me in Dallas by an editor at the *Times-Herald,* who in his brief career had worked in as many cities as Alvin Dark, the baseball manager, did in his: "You can't shoot a moving target." The point was that no one could pin a defeat on his résumé if he had moved on by the time the critics caught up with the paper's performance. But what struck me most was the extent to which newspapermen are short-term journeymen, skilled only in the craft of producing a paper—using the staff and the wires as indistinguishable parts in a great assembly line. They rarely understand the politics of a city as someone might who was on the job for longer than a year. Nor do they become politically prominent themselves, as, say, Greeley was in his day; they're too intent on improving their careers with frequent hops. And the swarms of newspaper conventions and seminars are best understood as job fairs.

What makes it easier for editors to jump from paper to paper is that many newspapers are now merely digests of available wire services. Staff reporters fill in on local stories, but the wires write the leading domestic and international dispatches. Thus any editor who can find the Associated Press in his computer file can find stories to fill most of the holes in the paper. What isn't there can be culled from any of the other services: United Press International; Knight-Ridder; Field; *Los Angeles Times/Washington Post*; *New York Times*; Hearst; etc. These wires pour into a newspaper's mainframe computer daily—wire editors are best thought of as flood-control experts—so all you need to worry about is keeping the word processors in working order.

When there is more than one paper in town, the syndicates are usually divided up so that the same *New York Times* reprint doesn't appear in both papers. In cases where one paper subscribes to the *Times,* the other might get the *Los Angeles Times/Washington Post,* as if to balance its power. Indeed, the strength of the major dailies in their coverage of the rest of the country is in their wire services, which have jointly eclipsed UPI as the second wire service behind AP. In fact, so many editors have come to rely on both the *Times* and the *Los Angeles Times/Washington Post* service that the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* have launched national editions. Times-Mirror, which owns the *Los Angeles Times,* has papers in Dallas, Denver, Hartford, Long Island, Stamford, and Greenwich.

With the technology available in the form of satellites that shift copy around the country with the ease of a long-distance phone call, it is now possible to collect in one newspaper the best journalism from all over the country and the world. A paper in Texas, if it chooses, can subscribe to the foreign dispatches of the London *Observer.* But as Mort Rosenblum of AP wrote in *Coups & Earthquakes*: "On the surface, America's news-gathering apparatus appears sophisticated and all-encompassing. The carrier pigeons have been transistorized, and the battered trench coats have given way to drip-dry safari suits. . . . But for all the changes, there has been little real improvement." The reason for this is largely that there is no incentive to improve coverage unless competition forces it, as it has in Dallas, Denver, and Detroit—to list three cities whose

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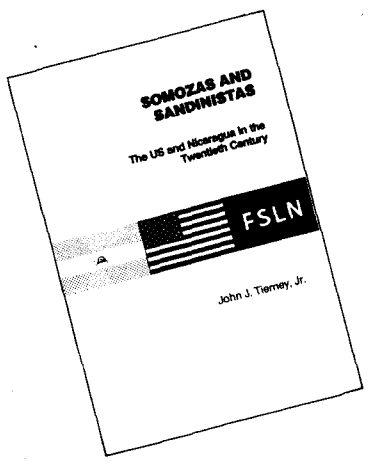

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newspapers are responding to the competitive impulse. But left on their own, without competition, newspaper editors can publish whatever the traffic will bear.

The gulf that has developed between most newspapers and their cities is symbolized by the fate of the newspaper offices themselves. For the most part, at least in the industrial sections of the country, these still tend to be clustered in the old, downtown section. If I was traveling by train or bus, it was often only a short walk from the station to a Gothic-inspired building. In Detroit, in Chicago, or in Seattle, the newspapers are as central to downtown life as the Agora was in Athens, harking back to an era when the mission of the paper was stated in grandiloquent language on the masthead.

In recent years, however, newspapers have joined the flight to the suburbs, and when I didn't have a car it became nearly impossible to get to the offices of one of these exiles. The *Anchorage Daily News* is eight miles from center city, in an industrial part that appears to be waiting for the rest of the city to find it. Likewise, the *Houston Post* is off one of the many freeways outside the city, in a building that from a distance resembles a large white radiator. The *Madison* [Wisconsin] *Capital-Times* is inaccessible except by car.

Perhaps the best illustration of what has happened to the newspaper office as a symbolic part of the community is in Austin, where the *American-Statesman*, a Cox newspaper, has become the only one in town. Previously, the paper had offices not far from the capitol, in a building somewhat resembling a bottling plant. Now that the *American-Statesman* has the monopoly the offices are housed in an unbelievably opulent structure. Like a medieval fortress, it sits on the south bank of the Colorado River. The parking lot is divided by hierarchical lines like any modern corporation, and, like most newspapers, it has an elaborate security system at the door.

The editor I saw had an office befitting that of a senior vice-president of a large insurance company. The carpeting and the walls were color coordinated in gray. The desk was spacious and hinted of Scandinavian design. If there were books in the office, I don't remember them. The first question the editor asked me was: "How long do you expect to be in business?" His tone was that of a banker about to be petitioned for a loan.

As the monopoly paper in Austin, the *American-Statesman* can pretty much do as it pleases, and that includes plowing all its profits into an architectural white elephant. Many of the papers I visited, even if they were short staffed, were putting up new buildings or installing hugely expensive and elaborate computer systems. The *Dallas Morning News* is adding on a new wing. The *Spokane Spokesman-Review* is putting up a new building. The *Houston Post* is moving its newsroom upstairs and putting in a $3 million computer. Some of this, obviously, is the cost of doing business, but in newspapers today I sensed it is a major preoccupation, at the cost of improved coverage. For example, the number of foreign correspondents for American papers has dropped to 450 from a postwar high of 2,500, and that is not because nobody can afford to send someone abroad.

The consequence of what Liebling called a "monovocal, monopolistic, monocular" press goes beyond the obvious loss to the political debate. Despite the profits that can be generated in a one-paper town, the

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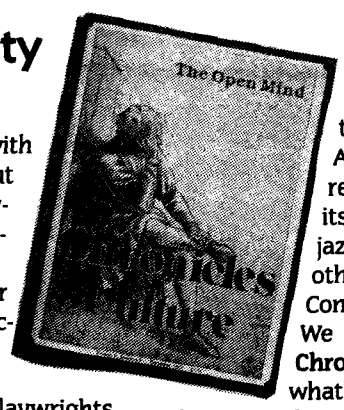

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habits of monopoly journalism—arrogance, indifference to the readership, wasting money—threaten the economic foundation of the newspaper industry. The current financial success enjoyed by so many papers may well prove short-lived.

Certainly the early success, at least with circulation, of *USA Today* points to the weaknesses of numerous daily papers. Gannett launched the national newspaper on September 15, 1982 in five cities. By October, circulation was 221,000; by January, 1983, it was 531,000; and by April, 1983, it reached 1,109,000, placing it third behind the *Wall Street Journal* and the *New York Daily News* in paid circulation.

Initially the audience for *USA Today* was to be the three million Americans who each day are traveling on business or pleasure. Many of these, reasoned Gannett, have little interest in the news of another city and would therefore welcome a national paper that covered both national and international events, and also included blurbs of news from their hometowns. Consequently a distinguishing feature is "Across the USA," which is the journalistic equivalent of Willard Scott on the "Today Show" inviting the entire nation to a bake sale in Ely, Vermont. A typical item, listed under Montana, for May 2, 1983, was: "HELENA—Area residents who engage in the frisbee-throwing sport of 'folf' may have to do their folfing elsewhere. A popular course, mostly on the private land in Tucker Gulch south of the city, has been fenced and subdivided for home development." The rest of the paper is a crisp division of news, weather, and sports—presented for quick perusal by Americans on the run. The short text is spliced with graphs and charts that highlight farm trends or the recent winners of the Stanley Cup.

Even if *USA Today* is the Holiday Inn of newspapers—readers know what they'll get no matter where they are—its circulation success is the first direct challenge to many monopoly journalists across the country. It may not be much—prepackaged news, if you please—but its widespread appeal indicates the extent to which many readers are tired of their local fare. On a more pessimistic note, *USA Today* may even be described as the airplane that will replace the railroad-like local paper. Increasingly, newspaper chains are now rushing to produce their own versions of national newspapers, and it is not farfetched to imagine the day when the newsstand will resemble that familiar strip of neon motel signs present outside every city in America.

While the railroad analogy may not be precise, it bears repeating because so many newspapers now have monopolies and are deferring maintenance to their readers—in the form of just getting by editorially—much the way the railroads sealed their demise by putting off maintenance on their rights-of-way. By the time the interstate highway system was finished and airplane travel became commonplace, it was too expensive and too late for the railroads to catch up. So it may be for the newspapers, as the likes of *USA Today* arrive daily in the form of new technology, making it easier for department stores to advertise elsewhere or for AT&T to broadcast the news. In 1942, Owens-Corning Fiberglas ran an advertisement in *Fortune*: "How Will People Travel Tomorrow?" The answer, printed below: "By train, says the New York Central, as it plans increased travel comfort to woo passengers in post-defense period." From there, it is an easy leap to: "In Philadelphia, Nearly Everyone Reads *The Bulletin*."

In their monopoly phase, newspapers are investing their profits in everything—cable television, videotex satellite transmission, real estate, radio—but newspapers. The only exceptions are the national editions springing up across the country. By the end of 1983, Gannett plans to spend $40 million on *USA Today*. The *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* already have their national operations. And the *Washington Post* is hoping to get its version off some time this year. But an investment advisory on the *Post*'s stock summarizes the importance of these national operations in the future: "The *Post* may try to capitalize on its prestige by putting out a weekly national edition. It would be a news-in-review tabloid focusing on politics and finance. But the company's big ambition is to get a head start in the coming market for mobile (cellular) phone service by setting up service in several cities. If it wins the desired FCC franchises, system development would be costly for a few years. But the glamour of this new technology market might draw much more support for this stock by 1985-87 than we project."

That is a long way from Greeley: "The best use of a journal is to print the largest practical amount of important truth—truth which tends to make mankind wiser, and thus happier." □

Karl O'Lessker

WHAT THE SCRIBES ARE SAYING ABOUT RONALD REAGAN

The honeymoon that never was.

Somewhere in *The Decline of the West* Spengler remarked that what Western man needs is not freedom *of* the press but freedom *from* the press. Little did that gloomy Teuton realize, in his own more literate age, that in the late years of this century our principal source of information about public policies would be journalists—political reporters, in fact—people as biased as college professors but far less well informed about substantive policy areas. Any reasonably attentive newspaper reader or television newswatcher could doubtless fill the pages of this magazine with illustrations of reportorial incompetence, especially on the part of the electronic media. Two examples from the Reagan era spring to mind:

During the afternoon coverage of the assassination attempt in March 1981, the man whom one of the networks described as its "legal correspondent" was utterly buffaloed by the 25th Amendment—couldn't for the life of him explain its disability provisions. And earlier this year, in a *contretemps* with William F. Buckley, Jr., a network anchorwoman found it impossible to distinguish between the General Accounting Office and the Congressional Budget Office, attributing to the former a major function of the latter. Lest anyone think this is not a serious fault, I ask him to consider how he would regard a sportscaster who didn't know the difference in football between a tight end and a running back. And how long, may we suppose, would that kind of incompetence be tolerated by his network superiors?

These mordant reflections are stirred by an incident in Peter Hannaford's new book about his longtime boss and client Ronald Reagan.* In September 1975, shortly before the formal announcement of his candidacy for the Republican presidential nomination, Mr. Reagan gave a speech to the Chicago Executive Club that, as Hannaford rightly says, "later would nearly wreck his campaign, and, still later, form the philosophical foundation" of

Karl O'Lessker is professor of public and environmental affairs at Indiana University and a senior editor of this journal.

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his efforts as President to reform the federal system. "In a speech of barely twenty minutes length, Ronald Reagan had set forth a plan to alter radically a relationship between Washington and the states and communities that had been going on for four decades . . ."

It so happened that one of the nation's top political reporters, Martin Schram of *Newsday*, had been granted the opportunity to ride to the airport with Governor Reagan after the speech and have an exclusive interview with him. Did Schram detect either the substantive *or* political significance of the speech? Not a bit of it. Instead, says a bemused Hannaford, he "concentrated on Reagan's intentions about running and ignored the substance of the speech, although he mentioned it in passing in his story." But surely the other top-flight journalists present, even without Schram's advantage of an exclusive interview, understood the importance of what they'd heard? "A Chicago reporter for the *Washington Post* wrote a story about the '$90 billion transfer plan.' It ran inside the paper and was not picked up by others in the national political press, indicating they thought it had little significance."

The politicians in President Ford's entourage, by contrast, knew exactly how significant it was. Ford adviser Stuart Spencer quickly assigned staff to research the implications of Reagan's proposal for use in the New Hampshire primary five months down the road. Having done so and having then spoon-fed the story to the somnolent news media, the Ford people were able to turn what had appeared to be certain defeat into a narrow victory, and thus deliver a blow to the Reagan campaign from which it was never to recover.

Mr. Hannaford is too kindly a soul to draw as harsh a lesson as I do from his own observations. The essence of it is that, with a very few honorable exceptions, political reporters are so addicted to the gossipy ephemera of the public arena (who's ahead in the polls? what White House staffer is trying to knife what other staffer?) that they are simply incapable of dealing intelligently with complex policy questions. Even their campaign coverage is a scandal: a careful study of the 1972 presidential election found that paid political advertisements "gave more than five times more coverage to the major issues of the day than did the evening network news programs, [which were] given over to campaign trivia, hoopla, polls and 'horse-race' estimates."† But it is these same political reporters and TV anchormen who have the between-campaign responsibility for providing us with information about public policies. But only when their own ideological biases are engaged do they become alert to nuance and complexity—and then, more often than not, they botch the story.

All of which goes a long way toward explaining the wretchedness of most of the reporting about the Reagan Administration. Two recent studies support this judgment. The first, a widely noted project by S. Robert Lichter and Stanley Rothman, showed that members of the "elite" news media are far to the left of the American public as a whole in their political and social attitudes. And as *Time*'s chief White House correspondent, Laurence I. Barrett, forthrightly says in his big new book, *Gambling with History*,‡ it is idle to suppose "that a journalist can really be 'objective.' To carry that off requires a suspension of judgment beyond the ability of most of us. . . . To claim we ignore our own backgrounds and prejudices is pretense." Most national newsmen are bitterly opposed to President Reagan on almost every major issue, and their reporting and commentary show it all too clearly.

The point is well made in a recent article in *Public Opinion* by Michael Robinson, Maura Clancey, and Lisa Grand, using the most advanced content-analysis techniques. The authors analyzed every network news story that mentioned Reagan in the first two months of 1983—a period, let us remember, when the economy was beginning to emerge from the recession and when inflation finally had been brought under control. Having classified the stories as either positive, negative, neutral or ambiguous, they counted the total number of words in all and found:

Stories in which Reagan was treated favorably totaled 400 words—two John Chancellor commentaries of 200 words each. Stories in which Reagan was treated unfavorably totaled 8,800 words—a ratio of twenty-two to one negative!

What gives this finding a special, almost surrealist piquancy is that, as the authors observe, the press has been furiously scourging itself for being too *soft* on Reagan, for serving cravenly as a "conduit of White House utterances and official image-mongering" (this according to C.T. Hanson writing in the June 1983 *Columbia Journalism Review*). In short, even when bad-mouthing Reagan the news media think they're sweet-talking him.

In some early-August ruminations on the relations between President and press, columnist Joseph Kraft murmured a different sort of *mea culpa*. The truth, he conceded, is that "those of us in the news media . . . are not scholars or even experts. We cannot, accordingly, be original sources of light. We depend, heavily if not entirely, on what other people tell us." And therefore: "Journalists, being equipped to deal mainly with

†Cited in Larry J. Sabato, *The Rise of Political Consultants*. Basic Books, 1981, p. 153.

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coherence, cannot come to grips with a leader addicted to romantic fantasy''—i.e., Ronald Reagan.

These groans and sighs were precipitated by the Reagan news conference on Central America. It is thus irresistibly tempting to ask who is the more ''addicted to romantic fantasy''—the President striving to prevent the imposition of Soviet client states in Central America or professional newsmen assuring us that neither we nor the people of that region have anything to fear from a Communist takeover there?

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The most substantial work to date on the Reagan Administration is Barrett's *Gambling with History,* and it is about as good as we have any right to expect. For one thing, the author is intelligent and experienced and (unlike most television reporters) credibly knowledgeable on a broad range of issues. Equally important, if surprising, is that he was granted extraordinary access to key figures in the Administration from the President on down—access that included not only many hours of tape-recorded interviews but the privilege of sitting in on meetings of top White House staff and of the Cabinet and being allowed to read and copy confidential staff memoranda and briefing papers.

What I find surprising is that Mr. Reagan and his associates accorded such privileges to a man who is by no means sympathetic to Reaganism. Did they hope to convert, or even disarm, him? If they did, it bespeaks a degree of naiveté I should not have thought them burdened with. To be sure, Barrett is not a member of the lunatic Left. He claims to have been a Young Republican many years ago and it seems likely that his present attitudes are those of your garden-variety Eastern Establishment Republican. Perhaps the clearest insight into them is summed up in his prefatory Author's Notes, where he concedes that he is to the left of Reagan on most issues. ''Nonetheless, a few of Reagan's basic policies seem to me necessary, albeit unpalatable. Some of his peripheral ideas strike me as either inequitable or inane or both.'' In short, no kamikaze enemy, but hardly a friend either.

The result is a book of some 500 pages of small print that will unquestionably prove a gold mine for historians. Many of the confidential documents Barrett was allowed to see may end up in the archives and be available to others in the future. But the tape-recorded interviews with, among others, Reagan, Meese, Baker, Deaver, Darman, Haig, Clark, and Stockman, will not be; and so the reports of them in this book—subject to appropriate caveats—constitute an invaluable source of insight and information.

The principal caveat is relevant to the writing of any contemporary history. It is that the individual being interviewed is mainly concerned to make himself look good. In the present instance this becomes an all the more serious problem with men such as James Baker and Richard Darman—not because they are anti-Reaganite wreckers and saboteurs but because their own political careers, unlike those of, say, Clark, Meese, and Deaver, were forged independently of Reagan's and will doubtless continue to flourish long after he has retired from office. Put another way, their deepest loyalties must be to themselves rather than to their chief. And so when the opportunity is given them to record for posterity evidence of their superior judgment, they would be more than human to pass it up for the sake of exalting Reagan.

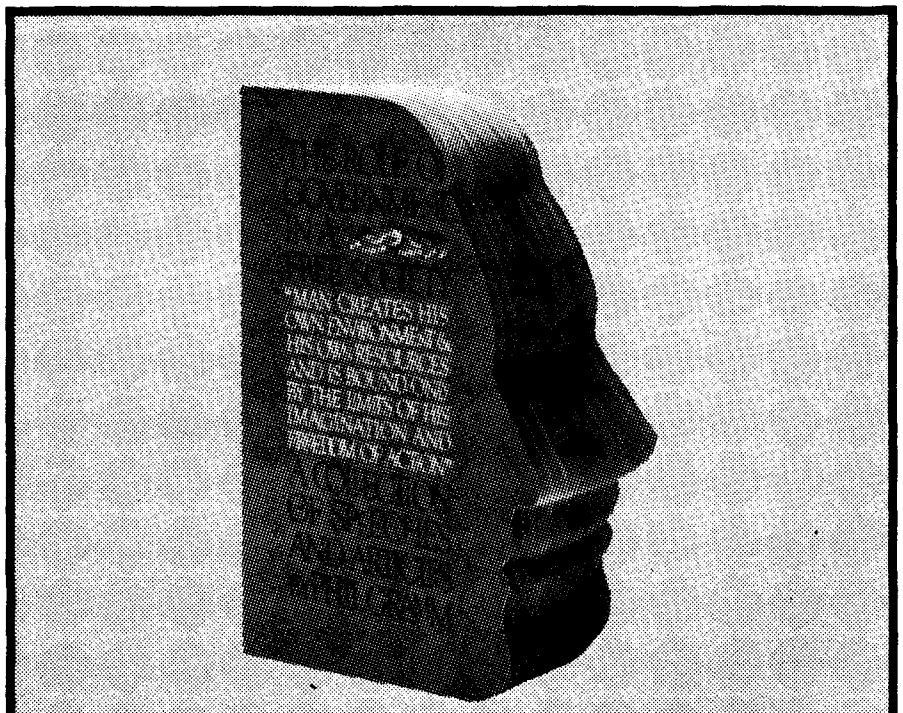
Yet the most striking aspect of the entire book is how good it makes Mr. Reagan look—hardly the impression Barrett was hoping to leave. Time and again the President is seen to have worked at and mastered complex situations. And on the evidence presented by Barrett, Reagan's alleged indolence turns out to be nothing more damning than the inclination of *every* President to find some subjects more engaging and more important than others.

Moreover, Mr. Reagan's policy instincts show up in Barrett's account as markedly superior to those of the conventional politicians and journalists who hold the President in such great contempt. To cite only one example, Barrett recounts how, during the late fall of 1981 when revised projections about the size of the deficit had persuaded *all* of Reagan's advisers to insist in meeting after meeting that he approve some new course of action because the ''deficit problem had become insupportable,'' at the conclusion of one such meeting:

> With an air of resignation, Reagan replied, ''That's very obvious, but a larger deficit is the least of our problems. What we have to do is get inflation down and business activity and employment up. If there's a bigger deficit then, the man in the street will say, 'That's okay, things are better.' ''

Mr. Barrett, of course, doesn't see that response as at all worthy of respect. Instead, he blames the nation's 1981-82 economic woes on the President's rigidity and naiveté. Granted, the author finished his book when the recovery was only just starting. He could not have foreseen that in August 1983, as this article is being written, economists of every stripe would be worrying that the economic upsurge was perhaps *too* vigorous, or that inflation at the wholesale price level would be the lowest in 15 years. But the reader may well ask, here again, who was right—the President who insisted on staying the course in the interest of a long-term recovery, or the experts and pundits, inside and outside the White House, who were demanding a quick fix?

Barrett's besetting sin is his apparent determination to make Mr. Reagan look as bad as possible. So, for instance, though he gives the President high marks for the substance of his Middle East peace initiative, he feels called upon to remark that ''it was thoroughly in keeping with the Reagan style that he was on vacation in California when his advisers decided that it was time to seize the moment.'' The doubly demeaning implication here is that Mr. Reagan vacations more than other Presidents have done (false), and that his advisers make key decisions for him (false again, as most of the book clearly shows). Indeed, so hard does Mr. Barrett strain to put the worst face on all Reagan Administration actions that in this same chapter on the Middle East we find him criticizing the



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brand-new foreign policy team for not rejecting out of hand a National Security Council decision paper drafted in the Carter NSC and signed by Mr. Carter before leaving office. One wonders how loudly Barrett would have complained if the Reagan people *had* rejected the PD 63 approach without long and careful consideration.

One other small but revealing point in this connection: the first time Barrett mentions the new ambassador to the United Nations he identifies her simply as "Jeane Kirkpatrick, defender of right-wing dictatorships." Nor is he much more generous to her in later sections of the book, particularly in the lengthy accounts of the Haig-Kirkpatrick imbroglios which Barrett bases largely on detail supplied by General Haig himself. Can Barrett's antagonism to Kirkpatrick have anything to do with the fact that she is one of the few high-ranking members of the Administration whom he did *not* interview?

If the worst flaw of *Gambling with History* is the author's attempt to portray President Reagan in as unflattering a light as possible, its signal virtue is his success throughout in showing the immense complexity of the problems and processes with which this, or any, administration must grapple. Something like two-thirds of the book is devoted to major policy issues and the controversies that swirled around them. For the most part, Barrett reports them fairly, basing his accounts on those invaluable interviews and confidential documents. Reading his highly detailed account, one has to be struck by the complexity of not only the issues but of the decision-making process itself, involving the strongly held views of a number of able and intelligent people.

At the apex of the process sits the President; his is the final say. Nothing we read in this book (other than occasional innuendo) lends any support to the allegation that Mr. Reagan lets others make his decisions for him. But Barrett seems to find him blameworthy for vacillating at a number of points. On the author's own evidence, I find it hard to believe that later historians will share that view. To the contrary, there can hardly be any qualities in a President more dangerous than impulsiveness and cocksureness; especially so when he enters office with a good sense of his own limited experience in important areas. What Barrett sees as vacillation others may well see, and applaud, as prudent deliberation. Far from being a shoot-from-the-hip cowboy, Mr. Reagan emerges from these pages as an altogether solid and thoughtful man. That is probably not the impression Laurence Barrett meant to leave us with. It is a tribute to his skill as a reporter that that is how it comes out.

Two other recent books on President (and Mrs.) Reagan could hardly be more different. One, mentioned earlier, is by Peter Hannaford, a close associate of Mr. Reagan's since 1974, as public relations director for the state of California during the last year of Reagan's governorship, as partner (with Michael Deaver) of the P.R. firm that had the former Governor as its principal client from 1975 to 1980, and as a top aide in the 1976 and 1980 campaigns.

I confess I approached the book with some trepidation. It seemed all too likely that it would be nothing but an extended puff-piece—the sort of book you gag over even if you're well disposed toward its subject. Happily, it manages to avoid both the tone and substance of that species of political hagiography. Though unabashed in his admiration of the Reagans, Hannaford doesn't let sentiment interfere with his telling of a good story, and the result is an uncommonly dispassionate insider's account of a six-year-long quest for the presidency.

What makes it an *uncommon* insider's account (and there aren't all that many written by people near the top of a presidential campaign) is Hannaford's circumspection about his own role: he neither tries to persuade us of his own superiority to others in the campaign nor gives us the aw-shucks-shuffle-the-feet routine. Except for being written in the first-person it reads for the most part like a case study by an outside observer. To be sure, there are no embarrassing revelations. If Mrs. Reagan had temper tantrums or if the Governor behaved boorishly toward his staff, we don't learn about it here.

On the other hand there are first-rate accounts of such critically important events as the ninety-billion-dollar-transfer speech and its aftermath, of the firing of John Sears, and of the negotiations that came so close to putting Gerald Ford on the ticket in 1980. Interviews of other key participants may enable historians someday to provide even fuller accounts than we have here. But until then Hannaford's is the best we have and it will always remain crucial to an understanding of those events.

Yet another bonus for campaign addicts is the contrast Hannaford draws for us between the 1976 and 1980 nomination campaign. Though a major, and almost successful, effort in every respect, the earlier of the two had an agreeably modest scale to it. You get the feeling that old-time pols like Jim Farley or Len Hall would have felt right at home in it. But the 1980 campaign was a behemoth. One small measure: in 1976, Hannaford remarks, "the issues team consisted of Martin Anderson and me, augmented by frequent, hurried phone calls from pay booths to academic and policy experts who, if we could catch them at their desks, had agreed to share their views." In 1980 the issues staff was ten times as large, with offices in both Los Angeles and Washington.

Did sheer size spell the difference between success and failure in the two campaigns? Hannaford doesn't address the question directly. On the ample evidence he provides, however, I'm inclined to think not. The Reagan camp did manage in 1980 to avoid anything like the ninety-billion-dollar-transfer catastrophe, but that was the result of bitter experience rather than increased staff size. More

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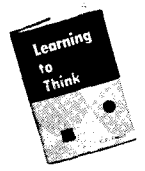

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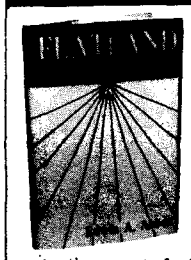

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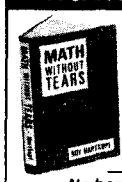

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importantly, the temper of the country had shifted decisively in four years toward candidate Reagan's own long-held views about our national needs. Put another way, it seems incontestable that a 1976-sized team deploying 1976-magnitude resources would have won the 1980 nomination just as handily as it did in fact. But it's great fun to read Pete Hannaford's fine account of the two campaigns and ponder such lessons for ourselves.

The third (and apparently biggest-selling) of this season's Reagan books, by a reporter and free-lance writer named Laurence Leamer, is entitled *Make-Believe: The Story of Nancy and Ronald Reagan.*** If the title doesn't adequately convey the book's flavor, this will: throughout its entire length the author almost invariably refers to Mr. Reagan as "Ronnie." Not just once in a while, mind you, not just when talking about the early years or when writing from Mrs. Reagan's perspective, but nearly always. If this suggests that the book is an extended gossip column rather than an even semi-serious biography, that's exactly right.

**Harper & Row, $14.95.

Based on, as both author and publisher proudly boast, more than 400 interviews, it purports to tell the life stories of both Mr. and Mrs. Reagan, with rather more space given to the latter, from childhood to the present. Neither comes off very well. The President, not surprisingly, is portrayed as a good-natured featherweight; Mrs. Reagan as an ill-natured, and deeply selfish, scatter-brain. They are redeemed, if at all, only by their love for each other.

But unlike such master hatchet-wielders as Robert Caro or Seymour Hersh, who have perfected the hundreds-of-interviews technique, Leamer makes no discernible effort to pick and choose among (let alone evaluate) his sources; he merely recounts what they have told him, even when, to our stunned surprise, it reflects well on his victims. The result reads something like what we'd have if the FBI's computers printed out in entirety the undigested raw data files on people who had been subjects of a full field investigation. Leamer's contribution to all this is a pervasive quasi-populist snidery, smirking and tut-tutting his way through every report of Mrs. Reagan's alleged extravagance or lust for clothes.

Yet in fairness I should report that there are lots of good stories, quips, and anecdotes scattered throughout the book. And the chapter-length account of President Reagan's hospitalization after the assassination attempt is as good as any we have, with every new detail strengthening one's admiration for the extraordinary grace and courage of Mr. Reagan's response to the trauma of a bullet in his chest.

So one reads the book as one reads a Liz Smith gossip column, being titillated, amused, offended, and not for a moment worrying whether this or that bit is true or not. The crucial difference, though, is that nothing Miss Smith says about her celebs can make any conceivable difference to the wide world beyond them. But the best-selling viciousness of Leamer's treatment of the Reagans, to the extent an unsophisticated audience may think it bears some resemblance to the truth, can only add to a cup already overflowing with cynicism and alienation—a state of affairs for which the elite news media of the nation, their congenital ignorance compounded by almost monolithic left-liberal bias, must bear a far greater share of the responsibility than all the mistakes of Vietnam and deceptions of Watergate combined.□

NASA at 25

The Soviet launch of the first man-made satellite in 1957 galvanized the attention of the world—and gave America reason to pause. The space age had been born with America only as a spectator.

Stunned by the Soviet achievement, the U.S. marshaled its national resources to meet the new challenges of space. To ensure that in the future we would not lag behind in scientific know-how, Congress began a crash program in support of education. To meet the immediate challenge, Congress created the National Aeronautics and Space Administration to direct a concerted American effort in space. Although we may have squandered the educational lead the crash program gave us, NASA has served America well in the quarter century since its birth.

NASA deserves much of the credit for meeting and then quickly surpassing the Soviet achievement in space. NASA has reached out to the planets and has begun to explore the universe. It has fulfilled what was once a dream of the ancient world and then a national goal for the United States: "land a man on the moon and return him safely to earth before the end of the decade." President Kennedy stated that goal in 1961 and since then 12 Americans have walked on the moon. No other country has sent even a single person there.

The research and scientific discoveries spearheaded by NASA have pushed technology forward, improving the quality of life, raising the standard of living, generating entirely new industries, and creating new jobs. So fundamental and so profound have been NASA's achievements that they quickly became part of our everyday life and have since been taken for granted.

Perhaps even more important than the myriad of practical applications is NASA's impact on the intellectual and spiritual well being of the nation. We are no longer a spectator in the space age. America is a full participant —indeed the leader. And this participation has fortified our national resolve, renewed confidence in our national purpose, and enriched the spirit of our times.

NASA mobilized the talents of science, industry, the universities, and government, advancing knowledge of our universe further than in all previous history. In doing so, NASA has set the standard for American efforts to compete across the whole spectrum of advancing technologies.

In this 25th anniversary year of NASA's birth, Americans should pause and reflect upon the great achievements and national pride that our space agency has brought about.

UNITED TECHNOLOGIES

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RALPH NADER'S FIFTH COLUMN

by Laura Ingraham

Contrary to most popular impressions, the greatest tyranny in the country is not from Washington, it is not from New York, it is the local tyranny. —Ralph Nader

It is not surprising that Ralph Nader, consumer activist, should absolve Washington from responsibility for public repression. For Nader, the government is the solution for ills brought about by corporate irresponsibility. So when he speaks of "local tyranny" he is referring to truant companies: companies that dump chemicals into waterways, companies that build nasty weapons, and, worst of all, companies that make large profits. Nader, of course, is not referring to an obese and tyrannical organization of his own: Public Interest Research Group (PIRG).

Nader got his idea for PIRGs back in 1970. Together with Donald Ross, New York PIRG's first executive director, Nader wrote a book, *Action for a Change,* which instructed activists on how to start and maintain these research groups. It was easy. First they established a national PIRG office with the $280,000 Nader had won from an invasion of privacy suit against General Motors. And local PIRGs? Here the formula was more ingenious. Present a "concept plan" to a university, conduct a slick marketing effort, and get 25 percent of students to approve of PIRG. Then charge each student a mandatory fee, say $2.50 per semester, which goes to PIRG's operating fund. If the student doesn't want to pay, make him fill out forms saying so, and refund his cash at the end of the semester. Now, with $100,000 or more from each college in your PIRG bank account, you can get down to business, actively protesting against nuclear power plants and the arms race, lobbying for abortion rights, pushing for tougher environmental legislation, zapping waste-dumping corporations, campaigning for the Equal Rights Amendment, and on and on.

This is a pretty plan, with but one snag: it may be unconstitutional. Two major lawsuits, filed against PIRG by students at both the State University of New York (SUNY) and Rutgers University, allege that PIRG's mandatory fees violate the civil rights of students. John Collins, attorney for the MidAtlantic Legal Foundation, which represents the SUNY and Rutgers students, says that the First Amendment's free speech guarantee and the Fourteenth Amendment's due process clause make it "unconstitutional for the state to require any citizen to pay money to support the political or ideological views of another."

The students charge that PIRG's funding mechanism violates the Constitution; they want back the mandatory fee they reluctantly paid to PIRG; they also want PIRG to repay approximately $1 million to students on whom PIRG dues were compulsorily imposed. If successful, the suit could severely debilitate PIRGs across the country: there are 180 PIRGs in 25 states, and three in Canada, each of which operates autonomously, accepting advice but not control from the central PIRG office in Washington, D.C. PIRG fees vary from campus to campus, usually from $2.50 to $3.50. Though not involved in its day-to-day doings, Nader says, "I encourage PIRG and other forms of student activism."

One form of activism that Nader does not encourage is plucky students challenging the legality of his brainchild organization. Here Nader's efforts on behalf of the little guy—the student gypped out of his two bucks—take a back seat. He's on the side of the PIRG conglomerate: NYPIRG alone has a $2.3 million budget and 125 full-time employees, according to its executive director, Marilyn Ondrasik. Asked why he supports Goliath in this case, Nader implied that the student plaintiffs were tools of the MidAtlantic Legal Foundation, a right-wing concoction. As for PIRG, plump Aunt PIRG, yes, she was getting round in her old age, but she still operated on a "hyper-democratic process" for the "broader public interest." Nader told the *New York Times* that the campaign to discredit PIRG was "a total smear," noting that the research groups were "about as nonideological as you can get."

Nonideological? Even Ed Lloyd, executive director of NJPIRG, admits, "We've never denied that we're political." Listing PIRG's five major concerns, Lloyd said they were environmental protection legislation; energy policy, with emphasis on "alternative" sources; education issues; women's rights; and consumer protection. In other words, what's good for Ralph Nader is good for PIRG: to the extent that Nader is nonpolitical PIRG is nonpolitical. While Nader admits that all PIRGs oppose President Reagan's positions on toxic waste, consumer fraud, and other issues he nonetheless contends that PIRGs are not "institutionally" opposed to the President.

Joseph Galda, one of the Rutgers students suing PIRG, believes this is doubletalk. But it is not PIRG's political views that upset him. He points to a quotation from Thomas Jefferson: "To compel a man to furnish contributions of money for the propagation of opinions which he disbelieves is sinful and tyrannical." Thomas Carroll, a plaintiff in the suit against NYPIRG, adds: "Whether NYPIRG's funding mechanism is constitutional is the only real issue. The suit is not a contest of politics, but a fight for the right of all students, regardless of their political philosophy, to free political expression and freedom from political coercion."

PIRG, of course, denies it is being coercive. Nader calls PIRG "a major extension of democracy on campus." It's not voluntary, he told me, because "there is a difference between democracy and charity." Ed Lloyd says PIRG's fee is fairer than other campus levies such as student activities fees because (a) PIRG submits a "concept plan" outlining its program to the university senate for approval; (b) students approve most PIRGs every three years in a campus-wide referendum; and (c) refunds for PIRG fees can be obtained at most schools by filling out applications. "So there is a great deal of accountability," Lloyd says. Moreover, PIRG's funding mechanism is open to any student group that can exploit it. Which leads Lloyd to speculate that the student plaintiffs suing PIRG are spoilsports. "They can't get the funding themselves," he says. "They are a small minority with no student support."

Not quite, says Hugh Farley, a New York state senator and SUNY law professor. "A lot of students have expressed to me resentment at having to pay PIRG dues," Farley said. Attorney Myrna Field, who is representing the Rutgers students, says it is irrelevant whether a

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majority of students support PIRG. As she sees it, the issue is the protection of minority rights as guaranteed by the Constitution: a majority of Rutgers students voting every three years cannot overturn the Bill of Rights. Moreover, there have been irregularities. For example, Rutgers President Edward Bloustein overruled a faculty senate decision to deny approval to PIRG's "concept plan." Bloustein also overturned the Student Congress referendum in spring 1981 that had denied recognition to PIRG. (In campus referendums PIRG needs majority vote, with a majority of students voting, which it interprets to mean: if 25 percent of students okay PIRG, it is entitled to charge everyone.)

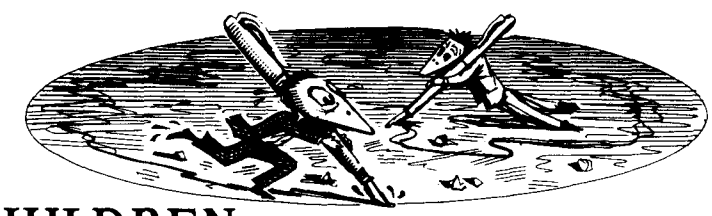
Then there are problems with PIRG's refunds. Rules vary, but in New Jersey if you don't apply before the fourth full week of classes, you forfeit your $2.50. Even if you apply in time for a refund, you won't get it until the semester is over. At SUNY, the PIRG fee does not appear in a separate line item on the student bill; it is tacked onto the compulsory activities fee. So many students have no idea they are funding PIRG. Those students who do find out, and do apply, probably won't get refunds anyway, because activities fees are not refundable at SUNY. If you don't like it, enroll elsewhere. Thus the PIRG refund process (when there is one) exploits the "negative action" principle: each student pays so little that it is hardly worth the time and effort to get it back. "The system preys on the apathy of students," says Galda, one of the Rutgers students.

Both the SUNY and Rutgers suits are crawling along, constantly tripped up by the obstructions of modern legalese. A decision will most likely take some time, and the losing sides are likely to appeal. But the publicity surrounding the lawsuits is putting the public spotlight on PIRG, in much the same way that Nader's suit against General Motors 12 years ago put the auto industry in the public eye. According to College Republicans' Chairman Jack Abramoff, challenges to PIRGs have been mounted at 37 campuses across the country. The Republican student group also sent out a 50-page packet to local chapters saying PIRG's funding is "unethical, undemocratic and unconstitutional." Steve Baldwin, deputy coordinator for College Republicans, says his group's booklet is designed to provide a "common strategy" for fighting PIRG.

Although PIRG is fighting back, it is with an increasing sense of weariness. Nader may continue to chortle about PIRG's virtues, but local PIRG officials have become wary, even defensive. There is an effort to expand PIRG's student intern programs, which PIRG offers as evidence that it is not entirely an off-campus group, that it is educational as well as political. But despite such efforts more and more students—conservative and liberal alike—are coming to agree with the arguments of the Rutgers and SUNY plaintiffs: mandatory student fees to bankroll partisan political activism has little popular appeal.

Thus the issue really is not whether one agrees with PIRG's progressive agenda, but whether one believes that it ought to be funded in such a dishonest way. Certainly it would be a healthy sign were PIRG to follow the guidelines it so meticulously sets for others, not to mention those of the Constitution. □

AMONG THE INTELLECTUALOIDS



GRANDPA SPOCK'S CHILDREN

by Mary Tedeschi

Whenever American children are not pouring their lunch money into video games, we are told, they are worrying about nuclear war. Fear of the bomb has been invoked to explain everything from declining SAT scores to increasing juvenile delinquency, and psychologists across the country —not to mention the Union for Concerned Scientists and the NEA—have united against this bogeyman of the eighties. Never has the Left spoken as authoritatively for children as in the antinuclear movement. So imagine my delight on reading that the biggest Christopher Robin of them all was celebrating his birthday in New York: Benjamin Spock, inaugurating his ninth decade with a lecture on children and nuclear war.

Perusing the *Village Voice* for details, I found that the party would be held at P.S. 9, an elementary school on the Upper West Side. Curiosity struck: millions of children are consumed and debilitated by their fear of nuclear war, but I had yet to meet a one. What did such tots look like? Did they slobber, throw fits, wear diapers into puberty? Did they prefer American Catholic bishops to the Jedi and Scooby-Doo? Was *The Fate of the Earth* up for a Newberry Award? And what in the world should I wear? With these and other questions in mind, I set out for the Upper West Side.

Outside the auditorium, two tables offered an array of knickknacks: flyers announcing summer marches, brochures from the War Resisters League, and an assortment of colorful buttons. Women of various ages clustered near the doors, their chatter overpowered by the whine of Joan Baez within. A few nodded before a large poster which hung near one of the doors. RALLY IN THE DELACORTE THEATER, it said. ALL ADULTS MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY A CHILD. Nearby, a cherubic matron urged passersby to sign her birthday card for Dr. Spock.

Distracted by her smile, I tried to scan the crowd for evidence of afflicted children. The first impression was one of overwhelming adult femininity; not since a "Take Back the Night" march had I witnessed such an exclusively female gathering. But these women, with their tailored skirts and jumpers, stylish haircuts and brassieres, were different. For one thing, they were smiling. For another, they were in fact talking to the few men present.

Opposite the doors, a representative for the Gay Fathers Forum offered pamphlets and newsletters on gay parenting. The program listed the Erotic Baker, that landmark of Christopher Street best known for its anatomically correct confections, as second among contributing merchants. In their concern for children, it seemed, gay men would be second to none.

But where were those hysterical tykes in whose name this war on the senses was being waged? I went inside the auditorium. Antiwar posters were evenly spaced across the bottom of the stage, and identical fresh bouquets flanked the podium which stood in the center. No childish preparation this. A brochure was thrust into my hand. Proceeds from

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the festivities, it said, would go to "B.J.'s Kids," a day-care center designed to "oppose the stereotypes that help oppress Black and Third World people and dehumanize everyone." To that end, "we encourage everyone to build with the blocks, to play in the dramatic area, to kick the ball."

But still no children. Were they snug in their beds at home, or waiting in the wings for their cue? A spokesman for B.J.'s diapered world federalists approached the podium and began the introductions.

First to appear was Serious Bizness, a husband and wife folksinging team that had "been part of numerous struggles for peace and human rights." When Mr. and Mrs. Serious left their seats, they nearly halved the number of blacks sitting in the audience, a feat surpassed only by the cacophony they created onstage. But the audience—now fifty to sixty strong—demanded an encore. Just when I was about to give up, our spokesman appeared and introduced *Dr. Spock's Babies.* "It is," he intoned, "a film *particularly* relevant to us today."

The hope that we were getting down to business died quickly when I saw that the film was made in 1968, a full decade before our activists discovered the plague afflicting their offspring. *Dr. Spock's Babies* is a documentary about draft resistance, its relevance less than obvious at a time when the feds can't even prosecute those who refuse to register. It was well received, particularly those sequences in which the good doctor sneers at anti-Communist paranoia. Suddenly the clamor increased, and there was Spock himself leaping gamely from the orchestra pit onto the stage.

Surely now we would hear about the children. Impeccably attired in a dark, three-piece suit, the doctor looked less clinical than ever as he worked the audience. After five minutes the mere mention of Reagan's name was enough to set them chortling; after ten, they were laughing and applauding wildly, as Spock waxed about civil disobedience: "It's just plain FUN, especially if you like to sing. . . . You wouldn't *believe* the acoustics in a jail cell!" He then moved on to his favorite diseases: Lyndon Johnson, the military-industrial complex, politicians who mention God, anti-Communist fanatics.

Unless I lost count, Spock mentioned children exactly twice. First, he castigated civil defense advocates for terrorizing children about nuclear war. "What a hoax on children!" he cried. Later, he explained that though parents are afraid to admit how frightened their offspring are by the threat of nuclear holocaust, "when *psychologists* ask the kids in school, then *everyone* owns up!"

Evidence of "owning up" was produced when the audience adjourned to the cafeteria for a light buffet. One wall was covered with the schoolchildren's depictions of nuclear attack. Pages filled with careful print described the rubble, the radiation poisoning, the lost parents and siblings. "One day a bomb was dropped on Manhattan," they began. Accompanying these tales were paintings so lurid that Edvard Munch himself would have blanched. People and pets floating in mid-air, limbs lost or askew; blood spattering and bricks flying as mad-eyed bombardiers unleash their deadly cargo on New York City.

But the biggest piece of posterboard had been saved to welcome Spock to P.S. 9. In large, childish print were scrawled the words: "Dr. Spock will speak to us about preventing Nuclear War. Everyone should stop and listen. But no one will." And at first, it seemed no one was. But then out of nowhere, a swarm of innocents appeared. Wheeling in the cakes, they led the beaming adults

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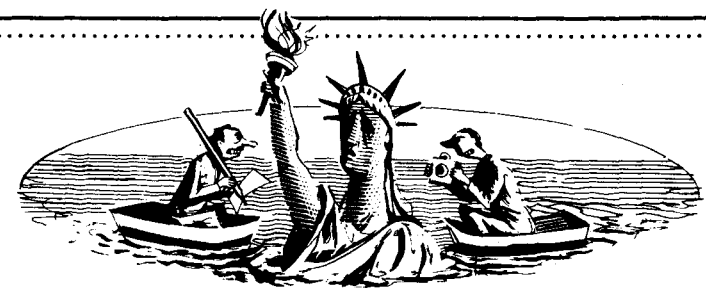
through two choruses of "happy birthday"; one in English, another in charmingly mispronounced Spanish. At last, I thought, the Afflicted Ones. But what curious little creatures! No nail-biting or hair-tearing or gnashing of teeth. In fact, given the gruesome reminders of nuclear annihilation looming at them from every corner, they seemed to be suppressing their apocalyptic fears remarkably well. Try as I might I could see only children—polite little creatures, to be sure, and rather more subdued than the clamoring tots I remember best—but children nonetheless.

All that was left was to sample the cake. Just as I suspected, it was riddled with carrots. Another musician appeared, this time to lead the thinning crowd through the Top 40 of sixties activism. The children, it appeared, were leaving. And so was I.

The Left, of course, has long put its offspring to good rhetorical use. Who can forget those docile children of the sixties who blinked at the sun as their parents sat or marched for peace? Or that ubiquitous slogan—WAR IS NOT HEALTHY FOR CHILDREN AND OTHER LIVING THINGS—written in pseudo-childish scrawl? Today's antinuclear parents are distinguished only by the lengths to which they go to exploit the childish predilection for gore. What third-grader wouldn't rise to the occasion of "How I Spent the Nuclear Holocaust"? Any support out there for "My Summer in the Gulag"? □

PRESSWATCH



ACCESS

by Fred Barnes

Faith Ryan Whittlesey and Ronald Reagan are onto something in their critique of press coverage of the Administration's policy and actions in Central America, but they haven't quite got hold of a major source of the problem. It's a case of knowing something is amiss, but not knowing exactly why it is. Whittlesey, the White House director of public liaison, declared in a mid-August interview with Lou Cannon of the *Washington Post* that the press is guilty of "deliberate distortion" in its coverage. Reagan, addressing the Veterans of Foreign Wars a week later, said about the same. Their gist was that the United States and its allies are made out to be devils, while the rebels in El Salvador and the Sandinistas come off as good guys.

Where was their criticism off base? They're right in suggesting that many reporters, for purely ideological reasons, oppose the Administration's approach in Central America. Yet the distortion has ordinarily not been deliberate, and, in fact, surprisingly few individual stories have been wholly objectionable. But there is a broader problem beyond that of any particular story or stories; that problem is access. American reporters have full and largely unfettered access to whatever the U.S. is doing in Central America. Uncovering CIA support for the anti-Sandinista rebels took no reportorial coup. But covering what the Sandinistas and Cubans and Soviets are doing is something else again. Their activities are skimpily covered because reporters aren't granted access. What, for instance, would happen if an American reporter asked to accompany Cuban soldiers during a mission in Nicaragua? Fat chance of getting that approved. Or what if a TV reporter wanted to file an interview with Soviet military advisers in Nicaragua or Cuba? Good luck.

The result of the access problem is a dramatic disparity in coverage. What Americans and their allies are doing looms large, if only because it's easy to report. A tiny contingent of American trainers seems like a division, and stories about possible expansion of the trainers in El Salvador from 55 to 125 take on a breathless, hellzapoppin' tone. Yet the threat facing the non-Communist countries appears small in comparison. There are references to the size of Nicaragua's army, but no persistent, eyewitness coverage. Cuban and Soviet activities shrink nearly to nonexistence. Atrocities by rebels in El Salvador get only fleeting mention in the press. The impression left is of a whopping American intervention to combat a miniscule threat.

The access dilemma is not a new one. It had an enormous impact on coverage of the Vietnam war. The My Lai massacre of several hundred South Vietnamese civilians by American troops got lavish attention; repeated atrocities by the Vietcong or North Vietnamese got practically none. And because American correspondents had no access to the Vietcong in 1968, they didn't know the Tet Offensive was a devastating defeat for them. Israel, too, has learned the downside of access. Its invasion of Lebanon last year was intricately covered by the world's press; what the Syrians and PLO were doing got far less attention because of reporters' limited access to them. The Israelis thus were painted as brutal aggressors, the Syrians and PLO as forces for peace and tranquility. Syrian atrocities in Lebanon—and in Syria itself—have gone virtually uncovered in the press. No reporters were around to see them or, afterwards, to piece together what had happened.

Why has the seemingly incontrovertible evidence of the use of toxic "yellow rain" in Laos and Cambodia, supplied by the Soviets and dispensed by the Vietnamese, been treated so skeptically in the press? Again, one reason is access; reporters can't go to those countries to check for themselves. And when a Harvard biologist comes up with

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another explanation—bees did it—it is judged to have equal merit. In a June editorial, the *New York Times* said the biologist had "compellingly described" his theory. "The bee excrement hypothesis does not account for everything going on in Southeast Asia, but it would explain a lot about yellow rain," the editorial said. " . . . It's too soon to pronounce either the Administration's theory or [the biologist's] as proven." Without access to Laos and Cambodia, reporters consider one theory about yellow rain to be as good as another.

Taking into account the recent wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran, El Salvador, the Falklands, and Lebanon, journalist Ben Wattenberg concluded that TV coverage had "unwittingly made it more difficult for free nations to operate in the real world." He formulated five new "rules," all of which bear repeating. One, "Communist countries can wage long, brutal wars and pay very little for it," as in the case of the Soviets in Afghanistan, where there is "no access, no horror" to show on TV. Two, "roughly the same guidelines hold for non-free, non-Communist countries," such as Iraq and Iran. Three, "a democracy can wage a quick war if it is on an isolated, faraway island—which enables it to successfully control the news." The example of the British versus the Argentines fits here. Four, "only at great cost can democracies get involved even minimally if the battlefield is an open country." Five, "on non-islands, democracies can wage only short wars, telling the whole truth, all at once and immediately." Wattenberg adds that "the new rules of media warfare establish a double standard for all open societies. . . . The nature of television news demands that it show whatever horror is available. Our horror is available: our adversaries' is not."

The most notable scene of uncovered horror is Afghanistan. Some publications have gallantly tried to cover the Soviet offensive there. *U.S. News & World Report* and the *New Republic* deserve considerable credit, as do several British newspapers. But the full-scale war in Afghanistan "goes on year after year out of sight," the *New Yorker* lamented in its "Talk of the Town" section last May. "No newsmen swarm across the scene. No satellite hookup allows us to peer between the Afghan mountains to see what is happening. . . . In a way, Afghanistan seems even more thoroughly forgotten in our world of instantaneous satellite coverage than it might have seemed in a more primitive era. It seems excluded from what we have now come more and more to accept as reality. The world today is crisscrossed with beams bearing messages and lights. But in the interstices of those beams is darkness, and in that darkness a whole war is being hidden."

• • •

Mention to your friends that you read a great article in *Parade* magazine and guess what the response will be. A sneer, for sure. Or try something like, isn't that new paper *USA Today* awfully interesting? Most likely, you'll encounter more sneers. The cognoscenti look down on such publications as philistine, frivolous even, and sometimes that assessment is correct. But not always.

If you didn't read *Parade* last August 14, for instance, you missed two unusual articles. One was about Twiggy; yes, *that* Twiggy, the former model and current Broadway star. She turns out to be enormously appealing, and something of a political anomaly in the entertainment milieu. And she uttered what is to my mind the quotation of the year. "I'm a Conservative," she said. "I voted for Margaret Thatcher, and I think she's the best thing to happen to Britain in the last few years. I know lots of people hate her. But listen, nobody could help the depression that's been going on in the world, and I really think she's done a lot to help Britain out. She's better than all those awful kind of left-wing men who are kind of . . . ugh."

The other item was entitled "Man of the Hour," and it wasn't about Eddie Murphy. The subject was Col. Harry S. Summers, Jr., a strategist at the Army War College and the author of *On Strategy,** a brilliant analysis of why the U.S. lost the war in Vietnam. Summers says the American effort was not aimed at the enemy's "center of gravity," which was the North Vietnamese army. Instead, American and South Vietnamese troops mired themselves in peripheral counterinsurgency drives against the Vietcong. *Parade* failed to mention this conclusion by Summers, choosing instead to trumpet Summers's view that public support is essential if American troops are to be sent into combat. Still, public recognition of Summers was refreshing, well deserved, and, considering the publication, surprising.

As for *USA Today,* the five-day-a-week paper that the Gannett chain has published for a year now, it is the nation's first populist newspaper. The stories are compact and designed to appeal to a mass audience; that means there aren't many pieces on economic troubles in Indonesia. *USA Today* is filled with charts and lists, some of them quite interesting, some not. And it, more than any paper in the country, heralded the coming of the economic recovery, correctly interpreting and then playing up indicators of good times to come. Maybe the editors just wanted to be upbeat. If that's the case, they succeeded.

A common rap on *USA Today* is that its sports section excels but the rest of the paper stinks. One bit of newspaper lore has it that folks buy the paper and immediately deposit all but the sports pages in the trash.

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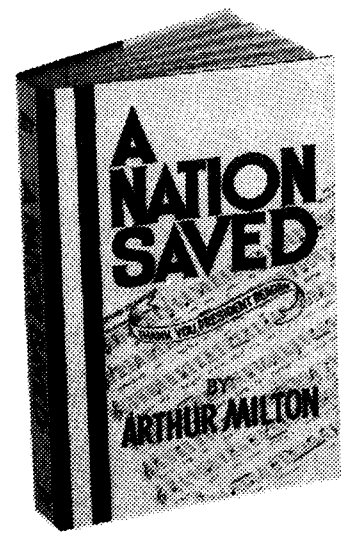

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Well, at least they get what has become the best sports section around. It conveys more sports information in a day than most papers do in a week. It skips the overwriting and sociological approach that mars so many sports sections, and concentrates on the results and stats in the four sports that matter—baseball, football, basketball, and hockey. For anyone who likes to study box scores or other chunks of agate, it is a feast. And if you're worried about what your friends might say, you can always wrap a copy of the *New York Times* around it. The same trick will work when reading *Parade,* too.

• • •

The phenomenon of sugarcoating a hard-to-swallow fact is with us again with the publication of *The Rosenberg File,*† a book by Ronald Radosh and Joyce Milton that finds, on the basis of a study of government files and hundreds of interviews, that Julius Rosenberg was guilty of espionage in passing atomic secrets to the Soviets and that his wife, Ethel, though less involved, was also guilty. The sugarcoating comes in with the finding that the authorities acted improperly at times in the Rosenberg case.

These conclusions may not seem equivalent to you; they didn't to me, either. But in the *New York Times Book Review,* Alan K. Dershowitz,* professor of law at Harvard University, insisted that "the complex truths uncovered by this thorough assessment of the evidence, much of it new, will please neither side in the rancorous controversy. For three decades the battle lines have been neatly drawn: One side has argued that the Rosenbergs were guilty and the process was fair, while the other side has argued that the Rosenbergs were innocent and the process was unfair. The uncomfortable conclusion reached by Mr. Radosh and Miss Milton is that although the Rosenbergs were guilty, 'the government's zeal [in prosecuting them] led to questionable tactics and eventually to a grave miscarriage of justice.'"

Sorry, but it looks like one side is going to be more pleased than the other, for the battle involved one issue above all: were the Rosenbergs guilty? Radosh and Milton went into the project thinking the Rosenbergs innocent, but concluded otherwise. That is bound to vindicate the folks who said as much all along. Meanwhile, in skewering a Rosenbergs-as-guiltless book in the *New York Review of Books,* Radosh and Milton wrote, "Painful as it may be for those who have long held the Rosenbergs innocent, the evidence available today makes it clear that they did indeed take part in an espionage conspiracy." To sugarcoat this, they add that "the Rosenbergs died essentially for political reasons . . . [and] were—as the critics charge—made the scapegoats for American insecurity over the loss of its nuclear monopoly. . . . They were shamefully treated by the court and by some of the officials responsible for prosecuting them." If that assuages the pro-Rosenberg set, fine. But it doesn't rank with the overriding truth confirmed by the Radosh-Milton book: the Rosenbergs did it. □

†Holt, Rinehart & Winston, $22.50.

POLITIQUE INTERNATIONALE

ARMED NEUTRALITY

by Taki

GENEVA—I remember the day as if it were yesterday. Hundreds of Princeton students demonstrating behind a giant sign that read: "Nothing is worth dying for." It was the day after President Reagan had decreed that all eligible young men should register for the draft.

Cut to a hilly pasture overlooking Lake Geneva on a weekend morning. It is a beautiful autumn day and the only sound is of cowbells and gunfire. Anyone hiking through the forest would know he's in Switzerland. The gunfire is not unusual, nor is it unusual to encounter bearded, middle-aged men loaded down with helmets, automatic weapons, and forty-pound sacks at railway stations on their way to refresher courses in civil defense. Or civilians spending two weeks at firing ranges for small arms. What would be unusual is to encounter an anti-military demonstration. The Swiss, needless to say, have enjoyed 450 years of peace because they know there are some things worth dying for. Or at least preparing oneself to die for. But then students, especially at Princeton, seldom get it right.

In a tradition dating back to the thirteenth century, Switzerland has never ceased to maintain a militia-type army for its defense. Military service, in fact, is a way of life here, with every physically capable male citizen keeping his gun, ammunition, and bayonet at home. With a population of six and a half million, Switzerland sports an enlistment rate second only to Israel.

Cut now to a few locations in the U.S. We see ugly women blocking access to submarine bases, hirsute professors picketing enlistment centers, coke-sniffing senators denouncing military spending. (Yes, I do mean the man who takes out Bianca Jagger.) No wonder Solzhenitsyn said there is absolutely no likelihood of nuclear war, for how could there even be a conventional war? Our resolve, or lack of it, is known to everyone, including those nicely tailored Mafiosi who run the Kremlin. They are not about to waste their bullets when they can get what they want for free.

But back to happier subjects, such as Switzerland's military preparedness. Ministry of Defense officials estimate that in the event of total blockade present stocks, including local food production, would permit both military and civilians to survive for up to . . . five, yes, 5 years. Special roads have been built for use as landing strips, while every bridge and tunnel can be mined and destroyed in a matter of minutes. Every time I happen by the Saanen airport, I see a lot of private planes that carry Arabs and their hookers to Gstaad, but I also notice planes discreetly hidden inside hangars built into the sides of mountains where underground hospitals, barracks, and arms depots are also located.

Because I am a good sport, and don't like to hit a man when he's down, I will not dwell too long on the American effort to rescue the hostages in Iran. Or the fact that we didn't have enough choppers available. Or even experienced pilots. Or a President with, well, for lack of a better word, balls.

Who needs a Spartan state, you might ask. Who indeed. Switzerland's system is no more Spartan than needed to keep the peace. And it is the Swiss who have voted on the length of military service. At the age of 20, men undergo 17-week basic training as the first stage of their compulsory military service. The rest is staggered over the next twelve years. Swiss males who are unfit, living abroad, or otherwise unable to fulfill their military obligations pay a yearly conscription tax to show they too are doing their duty. A Swiss male continues to spend approximately two weeks per year with his outfit until the age of fifty, and the only result of all this prudent militarism is a sense of camaraderie that is reflected in virtually every sector of Swiss society.

It is hardly surprising that subverting Swiss public opinion has been the number one priority of the Soviet Novosti news agency (since shut down by the Swiss) and the Soviet embassy in Bern. Last spring the Swiss government accused the Soviet Union of behind-the-scenes involvement in the Swiss antinuclear movement. In fact the Swiss even found evidence of KGB involvement in the Zurich youth riots of 1981. Unlike certain Western nations, the Swiss were not afraid to threaten the Soviets with a break in diplomatic relations. The Soviets cleaned up their act in no time.

But what I like most about Switzerland, more than its enchanted nature, its cleanliness, its hospitality, its sense of tradition, its safety, and its banks, is the fact that when I mention it by name liberals and left-wing intellectuals reach for their water pistols. Nothing gives me more pleasure than to cite Switzerland as proof that Utopia is possible if you have free enterprise, a hard-working populace, and a welfare system that excludes the undeserving.

I guess Teddy Kennedy wouldn't be elected the proverbial dog catcher in my favorite country, but then he never misses an opportunity to visit it. □

Taki Theodoracopulos is The American Spectator*'s European editor.*

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Remember from this to be properly vexed
When the newspaper editors say,
That "The type of society shown in the Text
Is rapidly passing away."—Hilaire Belloc

OVERDRIVE: A PERSONAL DOCUMENTARY

William F. Buckley, Jr. / Doubleday / $16.95

Franz M. Oppenheimer

Only a saint could not envy William F. Buckley, and I doubt whether any of his lycanthropic critics would not jump at the chance of changing places with him. But the critics envy him for the wrong reasons. They envy him for his inherited money, his good looks, his luck, and what they would call his "lifestyle." But what they ought to envy him for is his independence, his moral courage, his industry, and his faith. As this journal of a week in Buckley's life demonstrates, he is one of the very few visible media figures not enslaved by the pernicious myths that rule intellectual and political American discourse.

Take our age's passion for substituting committees and commissions with pompous names for the lonely pursuit of verities. Buckley has little hesitation in rejecting an invitation to serve as a member of the Policy Review Board of something called the Public Agenda Foundation, a Board "consisting of leading citizens with many different backgrounds, philosophies, and experiences" which "functions to guarantee the objectivity of the Public Agenda's work." The Board members, he was told, "review Public Agenda projects, publications, and other materials to insure that they are free of ideological bias, that they are balanced and thoughtful, and that they represent the highest level of analysis and research." One could write a book, or at least compose a sermon, on the fallacious premises upon which such boards are erected, but Buckley disposes of the matter in a few lines: "Prose like that gags, doesn't it?"

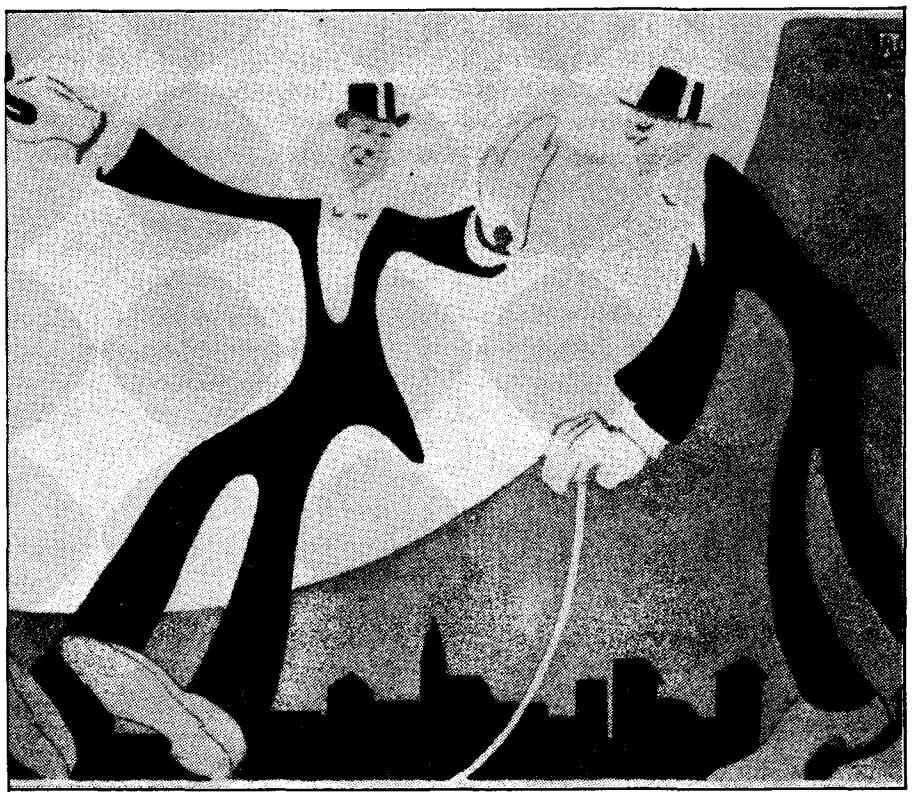
Even the great late judge Learned Hand did not have such an instantaneous reaction when exposed to similar cant. He actually *accepted* a place on President Eisenhower's Commission on National Goals, and resigned only when berated by an insolent puppy who asked him whether he could imagine Plato, Aristotle, or Kant serving on such a commission.

Buckley attacks even more dangerous sacred dragons. The Securities and Exchange Commission is one of them. For reasons mysterious to me, the SEC invariably emerges from reviews of its operations, be it by private self-appointed review boards or congressional oversight committees, bathed in the odor of sanctity. It is a relief to find Buckley frowning at the SEC's mendacious sanctimoniousness, in the context of an SEC civil complaint against certain companies controlled by the Buckley family. In the course of that proceeding the General Counsel of the SEC wrote to the Buckley family that the SEC complaint "does not allege that the described transactions were 'fraudulent.'" Yet afterwards, the same General Counsel seems to have told a *Time* reporter, who had reported that the SEC had accused the Buckley companies "of having defrauded stockholders to feather the family's nest," that the SEC's letter "was not intended to address the question of whether *Time*'s interpretation of the transactions was accurate."

"What then *was* it intended to address? Why had Fedders [the General Counsel] written that he was 'concerned' with the 'impression' left by [*Time*'s] article that the SEC's complaint 'alleges' fraud?" asks Buckley, with good reason, not knowing that disgraceful retreat under pressure is not unheard of at the SEC. Later Buckley expresses the hope that Fedder's predecessor, Stanley Sporkin, a man who made large corporations tremble at his frown and who is now chief counsel of the CIA, will at the CIA "be instrumental in doing as much damage to the Soviet enterprise as he did to American enterprise."

Another pernicious myth touched upon in *Overdrive* is the supposed biological and hereditary nature of homosexuality, on which many of the political objectives of militant homosexuals are predicated. Buckley tells of his astonishment at learning that his friend Whittaker Chambers had been an active homosexual during five years in the 1930s and of his belief—mistaken we now know—that former Congressman Bob Bauman had told the truth about his "tendency to homosexuality having gone with the alcohol." Buckley writes: "The phenomenon of the sometime homosexual, wholly cured, is not one with which most of us are familiar. . . . It is fashionable nowadays to say that a person's sexual 'preference' is not a datum of any consequence. That question is best saved for another exploration. My point here is the discreet one, that the assumption that homosexuality is an enduring condition (like alcoholism) is simply mistaken, by the evidence of anyone who knew Chambers."

My father who practiced psychiatry, first in Germany and after his emigration in San Francisco, had collected substantial evidence in support of Buckley's impression that homosexuality is a disease that can be cured. During my father's entire professional life he endeavored to find a true "biological," i.e., an incurable homosexual. He never did. Typically a patient, referred to him by another doctor because of symptoms for which no physical cause could be found, would say: "Doctor, I am a homosexual, I am happy, and I don't want you to treat my homosexuality"; and my father would reply, "I promise I won't; I'll treat your neurosis (your headaches, your insomnia, your stomachaches, your inability to hold a job—whatever it was); but I cannot *promise* you that when cured you'll still be a homosexual." Yet he never treated a single homosexual (and he had treated scores of them) whom he did not cure of homosexuality. By contrast he never succeeded to cure a single alcoholic. Homosexuality, he discovered, was usually a neurosis, in which an insecure childhood caused by a weak, ineffectual, or absent father played the determinative role.



Many other fashionable taboos fall by Buckley's wayside. On Watergate he says, "I'd rather the burglary, however reprehensible, had succeeded, than that Watergate and the collapse of a foreign policy should

Franz M. Oppenheimer, a frequent contributor, is a Washington lawyer.

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have happened. Put it this way: If the Scotch tape at Watergate had stuck, maybe there wouldn't have been any boat people.'' How true—but who else would have the courage to say so? And who else among the friends of John Kenneth Galbraith and the *Boston Globe*'s Tom Winship would dare criticize Yale President A. Bartlett Giamatti and television producer Norman Lear for their silly and humorless attacks on the Moral Majority? And when it comes to that noble but virtually abandoned cause of supply-side economics and the paralyzing fear of ''the great looming deficit,'' Buckley cheerfully seems to ignore the formidable phalanx of the most respectable in the land and their open letter to the President by insisting that lowering taxes is more inportant than reducing the federal deficit.

Buckley's opposition to taxing, and particularly to taxing the rich more than those who are just struggling along, must touch the most sensitive nerve of his egalitarian critics, rich and poor alike. Apparently he believes that inherited wealth is a *good* thing, endorsing F.A. Hayek's insistence ''that if one came upon a society in which no one was wealthy, that society would be better off endowing one hundred people at random with a million dollars each than being without citizens with surplus funds.'' Then, too, he rightly reminds us that the philosophical premises of the progressive income tax remain largely unexamined.

Indeed, Buckley's daily life, as described in the eight days covered by his ''Personal Documentary,'' demonstrates how socially useful inherited wealth can be. Buckley seems almost maniacal in his efficient use of time. Lesser men may fear that when faced with a blank page they may have nothing to say before an hour or more have passed; but Buckley knows that after rising at Stamford in the morning he can breakfast, write his column, and have it ready for *National Review*'s editorial conference in Manhattan at 9:45 a.m.—having dictated correspondence in his car on the way. But even he could not do so if he had to drive himself, instead of being driven by Jerry, the most admirable factotum I have encountered since Lord Peter Whimsey's man, Bunter. We are constantly made aware that servants are a necessary element of his days: the book begins with the line ''Gloria brought in my lunch on a tray''; the country house in Stamford and the apartment in Manhattan function because the ''infinitely good-natured'' maids Rebeca and Olga, ''respectively a solicitous and fussy Guatemalan and an otherworldly and gay-spirited Ecuadorian,'' are shuttled between town and country by Jerry.

The time saved him by these helpful domestic spirits is not all consumed by affairs. The most appealing aspect of Buckley's personality is the time he gives to his family and his friends, including the servants who are friends and family both. In Mexico, Buckley visits his old retired nurse, Felipa, who was with the Buckleys 35 years, and puts in a call to his nonagenarian mother so that Felipa, 93, can talk to her ''about events in the year 1910!'' Buckley takes time to be aware of *all* of them, to worry about them when they are sick, to take them sailing, to call them on the telephone. At the same time he is sensitive about not interfering. And at the risk of offending Bella Abzug, he confesses to think a housewife's role creative: coming home after midnight he is shown by his wife the table set for a lunch with Vice President Bush. ''The flowers, the china, the wineglasses, place settings. . . . I reproach myself that men tend not to focus on the amount of time these things take.''

Buckley has never been afraid to confess his faith in God, and in the sophisticated intellectual circles of some of his friends that may take even more courage than his other deviations from the expected. For better or for worse ''prayer breakfasts'' have become a Washington institution, but that does not make it easy to write that ''[I] remember to count on my fingers the five decades of the rosary, a lifelong habit acquired in childhood, and remembered about half the time. That half of my life, I like to think, I behave less offensively to my Maker than the other half,'' or ''I must remember to pray more often. . . . ''

We need Bill Buckley. I wish there were more of him. □

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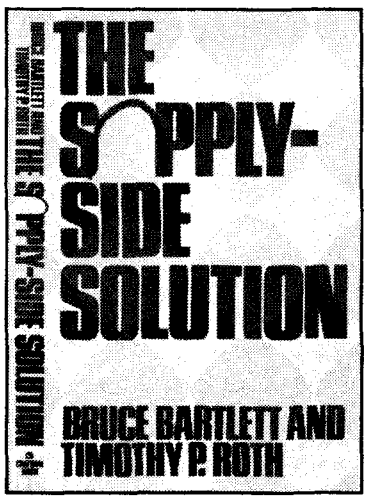

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A COLDER EYE: THE MODERN IRISH WRITERS

Hugh Kenner / Alfred A. Knopf / $16.95

Roger Lewis

There is a touch of the artist about Hugh Kenner. His discovery is that criticism need not be a meek and waspish craft but that it ought to rival literature itself in its audaciousness. Kenner isn't a handmaiden to the writers he talks about, he is one of their company. Reading him is to watch a great imagination let loose in print. He always embodies Skelton's phrase, ''friskajolly younkerkins'': an infectious enthusiasm, like Falstaff's. We can seldom guess where his arguments will lead: they unfurl like shreds of cumuli or else shoot and spark like storms. His tempo and tone vary to suit the mood. He is a conductor both in the orchestral sense (organizing a din into order) and in the electrical sense (betaking power from Modernism's gods and channeling it into us). He has now eschewed ink and paper, traditional impedimenta of the scribe, in favor of the computer console. *A Colder Eye* was pecked out at the keyboard. Kenner, like Vladimir Ashkenazy, plays and directs these days simultaneously.

By using a technological marvel to compose his latest book, however, Kenner is in danger of becoming like the writer in Gore Vidal's *Deluth*. With all of literature in the memory bank of the machine, the critic at the controls will be able to feign omniscience. It will give him a bogus sense of power. No longer like Falstaff, living off his wits, the critic will have only the fake potency of Prospero, living off his spells. And Kenner entranced begins to sound like the Shakespearean magus: ''For

Roger Lewis is fiction critic for the New Statesman (*London*).

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who is this that comes treading on my dreams?" he muses as Flann O'Brien merges into the text. In his previous books, especially *Dublin's Joyce* or *The Pound Era,* the impression is of omnivorous reading converted by inspired concentration into exegetical genius. In *A Colder Eye* electronics and amanuenses have brought the information about Ireland into Kenner's Baltimore aerie. His preface nods obeisances to his host of helpers: John V. Kelleher, whose letters have been "pillaged shamelessly, without quotation marks," Walt Bilofsky, Jim and Marrietta Gillogly, who manned the computer software which eased the book into existence. There are many other such consultants. *A Colder Eye,* like the pyramids, is a communal project, with Kenner the overseeing Pharaoh cramming it with treasures. Named after Yeats's epitaph ("Cast a cold eye/On life, on death"), perhaps it will become Kenner's.

The book's subject is Irishry. Ireland the country merely serves as a repository for a nation of vociferous eccentrics whose manners are now explored. The provenance of Yeats, Joyce, and Beckett, these authors have in common careers in which they tried to slough off their heritage by writing about little else. *Ulysses* makes Dublin the center of the world: a universal city in which not only history but the whole of literature convenes on June 16, 1904. Yeats is an Irish wizard through whom played the country's wild legends about banshees and giants on the one hand and the Augustan literature of England on the other. Beckett's tramps are the raconteurs of a Dublin bar, talkers whose conversation is endless because conclusions are not allowed to be reached. His crones are the old women from the impecunious farms, girls from the plays of Synge. Weaving about this triumvirate is a throng of other artists, leaving the impression of Ireland as a chaos of competing egos. Andy Warhol once said that everyone will be famous for fifteen minutes. In Dublin, everyone wants to be famous all the time.

To illustrate this notion, Kenner takes a cruel and unnecessary swipe at Richard Ellmann's biography of James Joyce. Kenner reckons that in interviewing Dubliners, Ellmann was too prone to take his contacts at their word. An Irish Fact is something your interlocutor will tell you because he thinks you want to hear it. From this *A Colder Eye* builds the thesis that Irishry means a congenital mistrust of the written word. Writing affixes words, disallowing the happy metamorphosis of speech which can otherwise alter and change to suit each context and each telling. Ireland is still a nation of the oral epic, great conversational confections which if written down would be libelous. Indeed, to print as opposed to speaking an opinion will be to land in court. As the English love lords, says Kenner, the Irish love lawyers. The most famous plaintiff was Oliver St. John Gogarty, forever aggrieved at being immortalized as stately, plump Buck Mulligan. The forename was acceptable, with its tinge of an Elizabethan rake. But the cognomen was redolent of a proletarian stew. All this served to make Joyce's self-imposed exile less the artistic gesture of Stephen Dedalus and more the prudent avoidance of litigation. "Lawsuits sleep like serpents in *Ulysses*. . . . If you insist on putting identifiable people in books you do well to stay out of town when the town is Dublin."

Ireland is a land of intrigue where drama usurps truth, which in any case, as Wilde knew, is rarely true and never simple. The set-piece in *A Colder Eye* that forms the focus of Kenner's ideas is the chapter about the riots during the opening nights of

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Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World*. The fracas at the Abbey Theatre symbolizes both Irishry and the birth of Irish literature. Synge embodied both Shakespeare and the half-forgotten myths from the country's bogs. His play also brought Lady Gregory and W.B. Yeats into the action: the former as patron of the arts and translator of Gaelic, the latter as impresario and listener to the rhythms of Synge's words. Kenner's account of all the real facts and Irish Facts present in the myriad reports of this event is a cabaret act in addition to being a skilled critical disquisition. He adopts the idiom of those he talks about: here he is a virtuosic table-talker. His sentences (as Henry James would say) have a brogue in them as they break. Listen to this: "It was the rioting had launched John Synge into seminar immortality, like, as the man said of someone else altogether, a shot off a shovel."

The disturbances at the Abbey and the disturbing variegation in the reports made what Kenner calls "a bag of cats" whose mewling reverberated forever. He charts the melange of reprisals and accusations and out of an instance of Dublin scandal divines the origins of Yeats, Joyce, Beckett, and O'Casey. *A Colder Eye* proceeds to give us sections on each of these major figures, as well as giving space to less-well-circulated names. All is related back to the convoluted common inheritance of the Irish language and sensibility. The life and works of Yeats also modulate through all the chapters. He is an artist who discovers "now what oft was thought, to which the poet brings new adequacy of expression; no: what ne'er was thought save by him, to which we bring our somewhat bedazzled assent."

Kenner began his career with a book about G.K. Chesterton's use of paradox and all his subsequent work has sought to locate the ingenious twists and conundrums that lurk in other artists. Kenner himself is a man of paradox: a critic who has earned the title of artist, a commentator frequently cleverer than the people he is conscripted to explain. *A Colder Eye* is the best work of literary criticism to have been published in many years, but it does mark a troubling trend in its author. He is becoming too clever. A meditation about Irishry is an attempt at the impossible, like trying to arrange into its individual conversations the babble filtered through a telephone exchange. The result is a cold eye: a glazed, almost unearthly stare like that from a corpse. To say this is to invoke his notion that *Finnegans Wake* is a cadaver shivering with insectile local life. This is the feeling left by the book Kenner has written. Brilliant, yes, but is it plausible? Perhaps the eye is that of the lens rather than of Yeats's tombstone. Kenner, like Isherwood, edited nothing from his gaze. The result is disconcerting, it is too perfect. Reading *A Colder Eye,* I felt like Chesterton playing croquet: "It is logically possible to play too well to enjoy it at all . . . The moment the game is perfect the game disappears." It is almost as though devils and fairies and ghosts, the supernatural shades of the Irish imagination, are making fun of you: "They are sending you the Perfect Game, which is no game . . . I heard the dull click of the balls touching, and ran into the house like one pursued." □

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It is always difficult to write with taste about distasteful subjects. Greed, fanaticism, vulgarity, and narcissism can be made interesting, even entertaining, but they leave an unpleasant aftertaste—one of the main problems with much of our contemporary fiction and social commentary. Still, there are some writers with enough humor and insight to give us an enjoyable cartoon view of grotesque milieus, past and present. Anyone who has read Benjamin J. Stein's *Dreemz*, an inspired send-up of present-day Hollywood and Los Angeles that the *New York Times* called "a witty, scary book full of bizarre epiphanies," will know what I mean.

But Ben Stein is more than the F. Scott Fitzgerald of Tinsel Town. A frequent contributor to these pages and—to put my cards on the table at the outset—an old and cherished friend of mine, he is a writer who wears many hats. Even more to his credit is the fact that most of them fit exceedingly well. Novelist, columnist, economic analyst, scenarist, social commentator, and comic artist, Ben has entertained and occasionally edified a large public on subjects as diverse as gilt-edged securities and guilt-edged insecurities, Valley Girls and vivisectionists, Watergate and Weimaraners. He also continues to amaze with his prolific output; besides a regular column in the *Los Angeles Herald-Examiner*, frequent pieces in the *Washington Post* and *Wall Street Journal,* and the occasional screen treatment, he is a seemingly endless fount of new fiction and nonfiction titles.

This summer alone, Doubleday has come out with his latest novel, *The Manhattan Gambit*, and Bantam has released a new paperback edition of his best-selling *'Ludes*, a wrenching chronicle of drugs and self-delusion that George Will—a man seldom given to positive overstatement—has hailed as ". . . reporting raised to the level of literature. It conveys a moral truth about the terrible price paid by persons who use chemicals to treat the pain of spiritual emptiness."

Both books are worth reading, but on the principle that light matter floats to the top, and since *The Manhattan Gambit* is more of an entertainment and less of a think piece, I will attend to it first.

Imagine, if you will, a few weeks in 1943 during which Albert Einstein is putting the finishing theoretical touches on the Atom Bomb, Adolph Hitler is chewing the rug and pressuring Heinrich Himmler to come up with a counterpart, and FDR is cynically ignoring the slaughter taking place in Reich concentration camps. Add to the equation a crazed Teutonic Bonnie and Clyde duo—an escaped German POW and a brainless Valley Girl throwback who won't eat meat but enjoys butchering people—and you have the makings of a tongue-in-cheek thriller that provides good poolside reading and could be turned into a fair adventure film. Indeed, if I had to make one criticism of *The Manhattan Gambit*, it would be that the book reads a little too much like the first draft of a screenplay, with its constant mention of period props, its meticulously drawn shootouts and car chases, and its zany love scenes. I particularly enjoyed the first tryst of the Nazi Bonnie and Clyde, a neat balancing of the old Adam and Aryan sensibilities climaxing with "ten minutes later, Trattner's face was buried between Maxine Lewis' perfect breasts as she lay on his bunk staring at a portrait of Adolph Hitler." Nowadays she would probably stare at a poster of Robert Redford, but one knows the feeling.

J. Edgar Hoover (rendered with a heartfelt nastiness), Allen Dulles, Enrico Fermi, Harry Hopkins, Robert Trout, and Admiral Canaris all figure prominently in the ample supporting cast, but the bulk of the heroic action is carried out by a sturdy, world-weary Irish cop and a rather piquant Jewish lady lawyer, with a proper assist from Albert Einstein who, after much provocation, emits a primal scream and dispatches the Nazi villain with a concealed kitchen knife—truly a man for all seasons. All in all *The Manhattan Gambit* is good, occasionally dirty fun with an underlying commitment to the forces of decency and an ironic last minute twist on history.

So much for poolside reading. Ben Stein's *'Ludes* is considerably deeper

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Aram Bakshian, Jr., Director of Speechwriting for President Reagan, will launch a thrice-weekly column this fall based at the Washington Times. *His essays and reviews on politics, history, and the arts appear frequently in American and overseas periodicals.*

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and infinitely more depressing, the real-life story of two beautiful losers who are swallowed up by the intoxicating, self-indulgent life-style of modern, big-money Los Angeles. Lenny and Linda Brown are based on real people Ben Stein knew and loved; to follow their step-by-step self-disintegration is to feel real pain, helpless pain.

When William Faulkner accepted the Nobel Prize in 1950, he spoke of the essentials that go into making a real story; he might just as well have said a real life:

> The old verities and truths of the heart, the old universal truths lacking which any story is ephemeral and doomed—love and honor and pity and pride and compassion and sacrifice.

The sad thing about Lenny and Linda Brown is that, while they feel a true and deep love for each other, a love far from ephemeral and actually quite poetic, and while they are capable of both pity and compassion within certain bounds, their stunted sense of life and self lacks enough internal pride or honor to lend their story an element of tragedy. They are not full people; something is missing in their makeup, not so much because of deprivation (both would probably have coped well with a subsistence society in which daily survival required full effort and concentration), but because they are exposed to a luxurious range of real temptations and false hopes that their parents and grandparents never dreamt of—that and the drugging unreality of the Los Angeles fast track.

Ben followed their story with a caring view but also with a healthy sense of skepticism about the setting. His own work in L.A., as a consultant to a famous television producer who was developing a new, political-theme sitcom, was ridiculous enough to keep his head clear ("I was mostly asked questions such as whether it would be possible to smuggle a rhinocerous into the boardroom of the Federal Reserve Board . . .") and he had plenty of time on his hands to witness Lenny's first big sale in his new West Coast role as a pitchman for shaky tax shelters:

> [F]or that hour's work, Lenny made about four thousand dollars. If psychiatrists could have seen how happy Lenny was after making that much money, a whole new branch of medicine about the relation of people to money would have started, dwarfing Kohutian analysis in its scope. . . . Lenny looked as if he had been told that he would never again feel pain.

In Lenny's world, love, self-esteem, and psychic survival can only come from or be expressed through more money, more tangible, outward symbols of having arrived. Perhaps his happiest moment arrives when, before the bottom falls out of his real estate scam, he presents Linda with a new white Jaguar. She reacts with the same kind of Pavlovian response one has come to expect of prize-winning game show contestants, shrieking, jumping up and down, and hugging her "host" husband while caressing the car's lush red-leather upholstery.

Then, as we know it will, financial ruin comes. Lenny and Linda, who might, just might, have coped in the comparatively real world of Manhattan, fall apart—especially Lenny. And that's where the *'Ludes* (Quaaludes) come in; a drug that temporarily shorts out both warranted and unwarranted anxieties and quickly creates a physical dependence and diminished sense of reality. In Ben Stein's L.A., "a constant swirl of the stupid stealing from the stupider," Lenny's destruction is assured, but only after a long, sordid, but occasionally poignant ritual of self-degradation. It is a tribute to Ben Stein that, despite the obvious shallow materialism of his anti-hero and the pliant, flimsy character of Linda, he makes us feel for both of them—and wonder how many more of them are still out there sleepwalking toward doom to the tune of the book's subtitle, "A Ballad of the Drug and the Dream."

Powerful stuff, this, for marginal cases who deserve warning off, for the friends of Lenny and Linda clones, and for those of us who find it difficult to understand the lure of lucre and 'ludes. It may occasionally lapse into the maudlin, but *'Ludes* is a moral, not a sentimental, tale, told with compassion and occasional glints of irony. I believe it is a book that will last, and one that will tell future generations as much about today's expanded, rather shallow lower middle-class aspirants to glitter as Fitzgerald did about that smaller, more fashionable (but, when you think about it, equally shallow) circle of beautiful losers that burnt itself out in the twenties and thirties, without benefit of Quaaludes. The weapon may have been gin instead of pills or cocaine, but the target, the vulnerability, was the same—a spiritual hollowness that, in harder times, would have been filled by the physical struggle for survival, and, in a loftier time, by a sense of self-worth and fulfillment based on something more durable than even the best engineered new Jaguar. Reader, shed a tear and thank the Lord for Ben Stein and occasional recessions. Both help us to stay sane. □

Who reads The American Spectator?

Clay La Force.

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KGB TODAY: THE HIDDEN HAND

John Barron / Reader's Digest Press / $19.95

Curtis Cate

John Barron's first book on the KGB—or the "Secret Work of Soviet Secret Agents" (as it was subtitled) —was published in 1974, and the pioneering spadework that went into that work continues to produce a rich harvest. Only a few years ago, it took the form of a relatively short but fascinating book devoted to the career of Viktor Belenko, a Soviet air force pilot who requested political asylum in Japan after landing an advanced MIG-25 fighter plane on a civilian airfield on the island of Hokkaido in September 1976. Today it has brought forth a larger and even more enthralling book, aimed at "up-dating" the earlier catalogue of "dirty tricks"—by telling us, for example, how the KGB, having vainly tried in late autumn 1979 to poison Afghanistan president Hafizullah Amin, had his Kabul palace stormed by a special assassination squad and team of Soviet commandos.

More than half of this book, *KGB Today,* is devoted to the life stories of three important Soviet spies, each of whom has a curious story to tell—and did so to Barron. The first, Major Stanislav Levchenko, defected from the KGB Residency in Tokyo in October 1979 and, after 24 harrowing hours (graphically described), was allowed to fly to political asylum in the United States. The second, Ludek Zemenek, alias Rudolf Hermann, rose to become a KGB colonel in the United States before being trapped by the FBI. The third, a Canadian economics professor named Hugh Hambleton, now languishes in a British prison for having all too casually transmitted scores of secret and top-secret NATO documents to a KGB officer in Paris over the six-year period from 1956 to 1961.

Of the three life histories, that of Stanislav Aleksandrovich Levchenko is for my taste far and away the most interesting—for what it tells us about the atmosphere of back-stabbing intrigue and corruption which reigns not only in the "Central" headquarters of the KGB's First Chief Directorate (concerned with espionage and terrorist activities abroad), but also in the various Residencies located in Soviet embassies in foreign capitals. It also offers revealing glimpses of how the KGB's Second Chief Directorate (the rough equivalent of our FBI, but vastly magnified into a gigantic eavesdropping hydra) systematically spies on officers of the First Chief Directorate, with a cynicism as ferocious as that which it exhibits in tracking down and persecuting dissidents.

Levchenko's career also illustrates how the original idealism of a privileged member of the Soviet elite is bound to be undermined by daily contact with a surprisingly attractive foreign world once he escapes from the cocoonlike insulation of the Soviet system. After a term of intensive training at the USSR's Foreign Intelligence School, located in a top-secret forest-surrounded compound near Moscow, Levchenko, who had managed to master Japanese as well as English, was sent in 1974 to Tokyo as correspondent for the Soviet monthly, *Novoye Vremya* (New Times), a magazine launched during the Second World War to provide a journalistic cover for Soviet spies. Although ostensibly an "independent" journalist who was allowed to move with his wife and child into an apartment away from the Soviet compound, Levchenko found himself directly subordinated to the local KGB Residency, which occupied the top two floors of the eleven-story embassy building. This Residency, like the Soviet embassy itself—about half of whose employees were *stukachi* (informers) forced to report on their colleagues—was a veritable snake-pit of intrigue, fomented by an Iago-type propagator of false rumors and suspicions, Colonel Vladimir Pronnikov. Pronnikov, in fact, even managed to engineer the recall to Moscow of his boss, Major General Dmitri Yerokhin.

Thanks to his engaging manners, fluency in Japanese, and ability to write articles that went beyond mere propaganda hogwash, Levchenko not only impressed his Japanese colleagues but eventually gained admission to their prestigious Press Club—the first Soviet journalist to be so honored. He was accordingly sent a directory of foreign correspondents accredited in Tokyo, put out by the Japan Newspaper Publishers & Editors Association, which, when he dropped it off at the KGB Residency, was immediately photocopied and sent on to Moscow as a "secret document"—a typical case of KGB skullduggery which won him a commendation from the Center.

As happens with so many Soviet citizens when they are exposed for some time to conditions in a foreign, capitalistic country, Levchenko was struck by the immense gap separating the distorted image of Japan as peddled by official Soviet media and the vibrant reality of a flourishing free-enterprise society with which he was daily confronted. The contrast was made all the more vivid during a period of home leave in Moscow, when he used 860,000 hard-currency yen that he had earned in Japan to buy a *Volga* car for something like $3,660 which, sold to an unprivileged Soviet citizen in ordinary rubles, would have cost about $14,000 and a wait of several years. The brand-new car was full of mechanical and other defects, which Levchenko had to have repaired by hiring two moonlighting mechanics, who stole the necessary parts from a rocket-guidance-system factory where they were employed.

Wherever he turned in the capital of his own country, Levchenko encountered mendacity, cynicism, and corruption. A Moscow traffic cop who stopped him for making a wrong turn was bought off with a Japanese cigarette lighter. From friends in the KGB central headquarters Levchenko heard of a KGB colonel who had been caught red-handed peddling Japanese cassettes on a Moscow sidewalk. To scrape up the money needed to buy himself a car, a KGB senior lieutenant who had not yet served abroad had taken to stealing the watches of First Chief Directorate officers while they were taking sauna baths. As a KGB colonel was heard to lament: "Two or three years ago, had any of us heard of an FCD [First Chief Directorate] officer stealing watches at headquarters or hawking contraband like an itinerant Armenian rug peddler? Now, everything is for sale. People will even sell themselves. Maybe it hasn't come to that in the FCD, but I can tell you it has in the MFA [Ministry of Foreign Affairs] and Ministry of Trade. The CIA is picking agents there like apples in an orchard. Andropov himself is very worried."

Unfortunately, it would be rash to rejoice at this revelation of the CIA's alleged ability to penetrate the upper organs of the Soviet state. Just read the chapter entitled "The Main Enemy," wherein Barron lists some of the industrial and technological secrets that the 400 KGB and GRU (military, naval, and air intelligence) officers regularly stationed in the United States, aided by several hundred other spies from East European countries, have managed to steal in recent years. They include the advanced designs for a "quiet" radar (destined for the B-1 and even more revolutionary Stealth bomber); specifications of the F-15 fighter's "look-down, shoot-down" radar; meticulously polished laser mirrors which Soviet technicians have so far been incapable of producing on their own; semi-conductors needed for the development of integrated circuits and microcomputers (essential for accurate rocket targeting); the designs and drawings for the large C-5A cargo plane (transmitted to the USSR even before Lockheed had begun its manufacture!); plans for the U.S. Minuteman silos and for the Red-eye missile (of which the Soviet SAM-7 is basically a copy); plans for the Boeing 747, which has led to the spawning-by-spying of the Ilyushin 86. And to this list might be added the Ilyushin 76, which bears a curious resemblance to Lockheed's C-141 transport.

Such mass larceny and smuggling were made possible not only by American naiveté and the illusions of détente, but more directly by the shocking negligence of the Compliance Division of the U.S. Commerce Department, which under Jimmy Carter was allowed to dwindle to a staff of ten inspectors and 25 other personnel. As Barron puts it, the value of the advanced-technology secrets smuggled out of the United States every year by the KGB's Scientific and Technical Directorate far exceeds the annual cost of maintaining and operating the entire KGB!

No less shocking has been the absent-minded casualness of the State Department, which agreed to the Soviet Embassy's request to build a brand-new building on Mount Alto, from which superlative eminence the KGB "will be able to intercept microwave communications among many of the government's vital installations." But the supreme scandal of all, to which John Barron devotes many pithy pages, is the brazenness with which a Soviet KGB colonel named Yuri Kapralov was able, with the willing connivance of a variety of left-wing, Communist-

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Curtis Cate is an American writer living in Paris.

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front, and other "do-gooder" organizations, to mount a huge "nuclear freeze" campaign from the campus of Georgetown University, a bare two miles from the White House!

Yes, John Barron's eye-opening book should be made *must* reading for every congressman, governor, civil servant, businessman, teacher, clergyman, engineer, scientist, newspaperman, and peanut farmer in our still too complacent, somnolent, and unsuspecting land. He suggests that the number of Soviet "diplomats" in the United States, and particularly those who enjoy the free-travel privileges of United Nations employees, should be drastically reduced. Similarly, the Soviet Consulate in San Francisco—a hornets' nest of spies swarming out in all directions to suck all the nectar they can from the dozens of nearby institutions and laboratories engaged in sophisticated scientific research and development—should be closed down once and for all. Equally timely is his plea that the CIA—the country's first line of defense—be radically revitalized, and that the woefully undermanned FBI receive a wholesale injection of new blood. It's enough that Barron has to remind us: "On any given day, the Soviet bloc can send into the streets of Washington and New York more professional intelligence officers than the FBI can deploy against them." □

NOTES OF A REVOLUTIONARY

Andrei Amalrik / Alfred A. Knopf / $16.95

Paul Hollander

Notes of a Revolutionary is a posthumous collection of Andrei Amalrik's writings, a chronicle of his confrontations with the authorities (in and outside prison) from 1966 to his departure from the Soviet Union ten years later. Amalrik provides a perceptive and witty insider's view of how Soviet society works, as well as the attitudes of its people toward the regime, politics, work, consumption, crime, and the pleasures of the flesh. At last the book is, or will become, a memorial of sorts to its author, a remarkable man. Reading about his experiences and beliefs makes one wonder how such a man could survive or develop under the conditions of Soviet life and, more generally, about the limits of the social-political determination of the human personality.

Andrei Amalrik is best known for his *Will the Soviet Union Survive until 1984?* and *Involuntary Journey into Siberia.* One of the most unusual, original, and idiosyncratic members of the Soviet dissident movement in the Brezhnev era, he spent much of his short life in prison, exile, or labor camp. In 1976 he was pressured to leave the USSR, and in 1980 he died at age 40 in an automobile accident in Spain on his way to the Madrid Meetings devoted to the issues covered (or supposedly covered) by the Helsinki Agreement.

One of the most striking things about Amalrik was his defiance of the authorities and his sense of humor. He had, it appears, an almost inexhaustible power of resistance, resilience, and will power, and on a number of occasions he came close to wearing down his oppressors and winning concessions from them. His hunger strike, which he describes here, lasted 117 days; he was force-fed on 70 of those. He never ceased to demand his rights, especially those specified by Soviet laws and prison regulations. This often astonished and embarrassed the officials, who couldn't imagine anyone taking these rules seriously. Yet under the limited or quasi legality of the Brezhnev years (when KGB officers once told him with unmistakable regret that they could no longer treat him the way he would have been treated in the past), such efforts were not totally quixotic. When defying official pressures and harassment he made good use of his command of Marxism-Leninism. In prison, for example, if "anyone pointed out to me that a floor had not been properly mopped or swept, I [would quote] Marx to the effect that slave labor is unproductive, a viewpoint to which I clung through thick and thin." It was a rare occasion that Amalrik failed to throw an official cliché back at his tormentors. On one occasion, a KGB man searching his apartment "exclaimed in admiration, 'That's a fine mattress!'," to which another KGB man added that everything Amalrik owned was fine, being "all foreign stuff." Amalrik responded, "Do you really mean everything foreign is fine? . . . It's our Soviet stuff that is fine." And when a KGB official inquired how he managed to live on 26 rubles a month (earned as a mailman) and still afford a cottage in the country, he replied: "You can chalk it up to the power of our Soviet ruble. . . . Obviously if I had got only mangy dollars instead of rubles I wouldn't have seen hide nor hair of our cottage."

What made Amalrik particularly unusual were his Westernized, liberal individualism and a critique of Soviet society unencumbered either by the hopeful back-to-the-founders outlook of some dissenters (i.e., those wanting a return to a pure form of Marxism-Leninism) or by the traditional-religious Russophile values which characterize the outlook of Solzhenitsyn and his followers. Consider his statement in court regarding political freedom:

> [N]o criminal court has the moral right to judge anyone for the views he had expressed. To oppose ideas with criminal punishment—whether those ideas be true or false—seems to me to constitute a crime in itself. . . . This court does not have the right to judge me. Therefore I will not enter into any discussion of my ideas with the court. . . . I do not plead guilty to the charge of having circulated "false and slanderous fabrications" but I shall not prove my innocence here, since the very principle of freedom of speech rules out any question of my guilt.

The treatment of Amalrik illustrates the Soviet regime's abiding preoccupation with and fear of unorthodox ideas. At his last trial he was accused, among other things, of *saying*

> that the Soviet system was dictatorship; that it was not socialism but state capitalism; that democratic freedoms were lacking, especially freedom of speech; that the populace was almost poverty-stricken; that a system based on violence would not last long; that I had called socialist countries "Soviet colonies" and had said that the union republics did not enjoy equal rights . . . that I had scoffed at the Soviet press and radio; that I had said that the Communist party did not have the support of the people; that I had insulted its leaders—in particular Leonid Brezhnev . . . that while looking at a photo of Brezhnev and Nixon I remarked: "What a disagreeable person!"

Hostile (and KGB rehearsed) witnesses would testify that he had praised feminists in "calling their movement 'serious,' " or had said that "in the U.S. blacks could join the police force, that the Jews transformed Palestine into a blossoming orchard; that juvenile crime was growing in the USSR; and that schools should not depend on the state."

One thing is clear: a basic feature of the Soviet regime continues to be the waging of war against any bearer of proscribed ideas. This is a tradition that stretches in an unbroken line from Lenin's time, and it is unlikely to come to an end under Yuri Andropov. While Soviet intolerance of free expression is often dismissed in the West as pointless if not eccentric, it clearly has served the stability of the Soviet system. The repression of over six decades has created habits of unthinking conformity, what Amalrik calls "passive acceptance" and an instinctive avoidance of politics.

One thing that has not changed since Stalin has been the total saturation of Soviet society with KGB informers. "The subject of informers in the Soviet Union is inexhaustible, the number is infinite, and the evil they do is immeasurable. Along with other kinds of evil, they destroy trust among people," Amalrik writes. The cases against him, for instance, were almost invariably based on information supplied by informers, some of

Paul Hollander is author, most recently, of The Many Faces of Socialism, *just out from Transaction Books.*

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whom subsequently testified against him in court. The ubiquitousness of informers in Soviet society is a momentous fact of Soviet life to which Western political scientists, sociologists, and psychologists have not paid adequate attention. The dispersal of informers is a powerful device for maintaining overt conformity and high levels of mistrust, resulting in the carefully made distinctions between friend and relative on the one hand, between stranger and enemy on the other.

One cannot overestimate the importance of this type of social control. It bridges the gap between the old-fashioned, informal controls (exercised by neighbors, relatives, etc., about whose opinions one cares) and the formal control of the police. From Amalrik's account, it appears that part-time informing has become an almost commonplace, casual activity for vast numbers of the population, so common in fact that the moral stigma attached to it has diminished. Certainly Amalrik betrays little surprise or moral indignation on the innumerable occasions when he learned that people around him, especially in prison, labor camp, and exile, had been informing on him to the KGB. The widespread use of informers also leaves its mark on the informers themselves. As Amalrik observes, "Nothing cripples people morally quite so much as the realization that their own well-being can be gained only through the misfortunes of others, that the shortest route to freedom is one that prolongs the term of a fellow inmate."

As a "free citizen" living in exile in the Soviet Far East in Magaden, where he worked at a scientific research institute, Amalrik participated in the following episode:

> Once I took part in a joint excursion for the purpose of sorting rotten onions. Several times every year, scientists, engineers, blue-collar workers, white-collar workers and sometimes even KGB agents are sent out in teams to harvest or sort potatoes and other gifts of nature. This is done because the socialist system cannot otherwise cope with the harvesting and storing of vegetables. . . . Five clerks at the vegetable storehouse supervised the work of ten scientists; and we were warned we would be searched to make sure we hadn't stolen any onions.

The nature of the Soviet system is illuminated in another way when Amalrik tells a police officer "that in sending me from pillar to post and back again over such a simple matter [a residence permit] they were giving themselves needless work." The policeman's answer: "That's all right. There are lots of us."

Another police officer "simply could not believe that there was no such thing as a residence permit in the U.S. To him, living without such a paper was as inconceivable as living without air." In a striking vignette of Soviet society Amalrik relates with understanding Nadezhda Mandelstam's refusal to sign a petition to the authorities: "She refused to sign the statement, saying that she agreed with it entirely, but that she was simply afraid. As she was seeing me out, she nodded toward a door in the entrance hallway: 'For the first time in my life I have a bathroom of my own.'"

In his contact with Westerners (both within the Soviet Union and in his short life abroad), Amalrik acquired penetrating insights into the limited Western grasp of Soviet realities, insights gleaned partly from his observations of Western journalists and diplomats. About Henry Shapiro, the UPI Moscow Bureau chief for several decades, Amalrik notes that "being a reporter in Moscow for forty years does something to a man," inducing in particular "an attitude of adaptation at any price," which in Shapiro's case included the "hiding in his desk" of an important article by Sakharov for fear that it might bring "very unpleasant consequences." Amalrik was also justly skeptical of Marshall Shulman's mirror image theories of Soviet-American relations, pointing out that "he [Shulman] apparently assumed that a method that proved successful in American academic circles [i.e., rational argument or persuasion] would also enable the U.S. to achieve its ends vis-à-vis the USSR. If you take the 'mirror image' theory seriously . . . what you see in place of the USSR is a well-intentioned but misunderstood gentleman."

I think Amalrik was correct in his assessment of the broadly based American attitudes that provide the background against which the experts and policy-makers have been free to pursue their own projections and wishful thinking. "The average American," he writes, " . . . simply fails to realize . . . that there are other worlds besides America. Hence he is willing to accept only what fits into the framework of his culture."

Other Westerners, Amalrik found, were similarly limited in their outlook, and their naiveté he found most distressing. While in jail, Amalrik heard over the radio that

> . . . Canadian prime minister Pierre Trudeau had visited Norilsk and remarked that Canada did not have such a fine city beyond the Arctic Circle. I felt the urge to shout back at Trudeau through the iron grill: "Arrest a million Canadians; send them beyond the Arctic Circle; have them set up a barbed-wire fence around themselves, under the muzzles of machine guns; have them dig mines and build houses—and then you'll have a fine city as Norilsk."

And of Angela Davis he writes:

> . . . *Pravda* was full of articles about "the heroic Angela Davis." . . . All of the murderers, rapists and holdup men I met were furious that a possible accomplice in a murder should be extolled as a heroine. And when Miss Davis was acquitted, there was groaning throughout the camp. . . . Angela Davis did not let her defenders down; when she was asked to support the liberal Communists arrested in Czechoslovakia, she replied that a socialist state had the right to punish its enemies.
>
> From the example of Miss Davis I understood that ideology can kill the most human part of a human being—the capacity for empathy, sympathy and compassion. I read that while in prison she had given an interview in which she talked about the "inhuman conditions" of her incarceration. I asked Captain Rubel why she under those "inhuman conditions" was allowed to meet with a television crew whereas under "human conditions" I was not even allowed a visit from my wife. His reply was: "Because they have capitalism, and we have socialism."

Such quotations make clear that this volume not only deepens our understanding of Soviet institutions and conditions of life; it also holds a mirror for us. What we see in it is not always conducive to pride in the wisdom of the West. □

SPECTATOR'S JOURNAL

THE YEAR OF THE MONARCHIST

by T. John Jamieson

So far, 1983 has been a very good year to be a monarchist. Queen Elizabeth II drew such an enthusiastic response from Californians during her spring tour of the Pacific coast that one suspects they wouldn't mind having the woman Betty Ford naively called "the *real* queen" as *their* queen. Then the new High (and dry) Tory journal the *Salisbury Review* carried an article by Prof. David Levy, "The Real and the Royal," which faulted British conservatives for their cowardly "defensive royalism" and called for something like an ideological commitment to monarchy. On July 4th, American orchestras, having retired to their outdoor summer havens, played "Wellington's Victory" and the "1812 Overture" because they are noisy pieces, without reflecting that these compositions glorify the triumph of monarchy and include rousing renditions of "God Save the King" and "God Save the Czar" respectively. And in New Hampshire, the state whose revolutionary motto is "Live free or die," over one hundred men and women professing the royal principle as the key to preserving a free Christian civilization met for a "Study Conference on Monarchy."

Officials at the University of New Hampshire must have thought that the conference to be held on its Durham campus would amount only to a dry essay in antiquarianism—a seminar on the two-thousandth anniversary of the Emperor Augustus's *ludi saeculares*, a mere series of lectures on the historical, theological, and literary aspects of the obviously outmoded institution of monarchy. But when the Constantian Society, the Order of Russian Imperial Union, and the Monarchist League of Canada actually showed up with the double-headed eagle standard and the Union Jack in hand, ready to snap to attention for the royal anthems, and when the speakers began read-

T. John Jamieson's essay on Count de Maistre will appear soon in Modern Age.

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ing congratulatory messages from reigning sovereigns, cited statistics on the prevalence of monarchy in the present, and described the growth of monarchist sentiment behind the Iron Curtain, journalists covering the event were shocked. "These people are serious," they had to admit.

The conference began on Bastille Day and concluded on the anniversary of the murder of Nicholas II at Ekaterinburg; "in my end is my beginning." Prince Alexis Scherbatow, a history professor at Fairleigh Dickinson whose mother was lady-in-waiting to Empress Alexandra, gave the controversial keynote address on "Nicholas II as a Man of Strong Will." Dr. Hereward Senior, an authority on Loyalists during the American Revolution who teaches at McGill, spoke on the impracticability of "instant democracy." Movies were shown of the coronations of Elizabeth II in 1952 and of Nicholas II in 1896; a slide show on the wedding of the daughter of HIH Grand Duke Wladimir of Russia to a Hohenzollern prince in Madrid in 1976 provided glimpses of Louis Ferdinand of Prussia, Leka of Albania, the late Umberto of Italy, Juan Carlos of Spain, and his cousin Alfonso, the Duke of Anjou, Head of the House of Bourbon, rightful King of France. Tables were covered with monarchist publications and memorabilia. A memorial service was held for the Russian Imperial Martyrs. Some Russians stayed up late with a young neo-Czarist survivor of Brezhnev's camps who played the guitar and sang songs of the underground.

Attendees included authentic American Tories, Torontonians and Montrealers, Russian émigrés from the West coast, Australia, and Argentina, Iranian exiles from London, and a lone Spaniard: nobles and peasants, lawyers and librarians, Anglican and Orthodox priests, an archimandrite with his silver-headed staff. On the whole, these monarchists were resolute, intelligent, informed, articulate, and hopelessly sane. They were usually realistic about the odds they face in the age of democratic demagogy and the Marxist myth; only occasionally did they indulge in wishful thinking. Belief in the inevitability of vindication by historians, if not by history, is hardly quixotic. They nevertheless hoped for restorations. Anyway, the Canadians have a monarchy to conserve, and they are well familiar with their opposition. The Russians know they have a country to liberate before the Czar can be restored; they know there will be opportunity for neither if the West grows complacent about the evil of Soviet tyranny. The adherents of the several dynasties in the world know that theirs is a common cause against the peculiar superstitions of modernity.

There were only a few suspicious persons. Some alienated, deculturated Americans have adopted Czarism and Russian Orthodoxy as their heritage; they are sincere though anomalous. A white Canadian *episcopus vagans* wearing leis made of nuts and fruit seeds advocated a constitutional amendment to make the Kawananakoas the hereditary governors of Hawaii; this demagogue monopolized the press and was universally regarded as a nuisance. With the presidents of two nobility associations present, there were no phony titles.

A panel on "Religion and Monarchy" attempted to treat the relations of throne and altar from different denominational perspectives. Dr. Senior and the Rev. Peter Hannan, a Canadian priest prominent in the fight against the ordination of women, presented the Anglican view: "no bishops, no king." The Orthodox got little sympathy for their opinion that Russian caesaropapalism was preferrable to Roman papalocaesarism. Inadvertently no Catholic spokesman had been appointed to call both sides erastian and describe the de Maistrean vision of the Pope as arbiter of international order. Even though the parties divided on these sectarian issues, all could agree that the monarch is the living symbol of personal responsibility before God and that therefore monarchy stands for the divinely willed order of civilization against the secular millenium of gnostic ideologies such as Communism. This was the genius of the conference. Whatever these monarchists came to learn, they really came to stand together and tell the world, "We do not believe that man can save himself through a political faith."

The Russian grand duke, great-grandson of Alexander II and imperial heir, had been expected to attend but unfortunately cancelled at the last minute. Born in Finland in the year of the Russian Revolution, HIH Wladimir lives in Brittany and is a man of imposing mien. His many official statements have contained much wisdom. He has never stopped calling the West back to its senses and away from its persistently wishful thinking about the nature of Soviet Communism. Russia and the USSR are not the same, he says; Russia is a nation that the USSR has been trying to abolish during all seventy-six years of his life. It was a Czar who abolished serfdom; the USSR has designed an empire of slavery for the world. Under Nicholas II, 80 percent of the land was owned by the men who farmed it; today the farmers themselves are owned by a dictatorship.

The conference was not a one-time affair; the new-found solidarity was too pleasurable for that. Next year the monarchists will convene in Toronto on Victoria Day for a conference which will be even bigger and better—now that the organizers have shown that it can be done. As the ancient MacDonald motto has it, "Dh'ain-deoin co theireadh e"—Gainsay who dare. □

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CURRENT WISDOM

The Boston Globe

Gibbon and Falwell undone—a learned editorial from the sagacious *Boston Globe* printed in its entirety as a public service:

For years, while historians studied the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, moralists have thundered on that the lessons of that once great civilization should not be lost on contemporary souls. In sermon after homily after commencement address, speakers have pinned the blame for Rome's fall on all manner of mortal vices. The Romans were self-satisfied. They loved not wisely but too well. They ate too much. They drank too much. Their standard of living was too high. Their work ethic was too low.

A classical archeologist and physical anthropologist from Rochester, Minn. has presided over a chemical analysis of Roman skeletons which indicates that Rome may have fallen not for any of these reasons. According to the *New York Times,* Sara C. Bisel studied the bones of 55 victims unearthed from the ruins of Mt. Vesuvius at Herculaneum and determined that they contained extraordinarily high levels of lead. Bisel's findings, reported earlier this week at a meeting in Detroit of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, appear to confirm earlier speculation that the erratic behavior of Roman aristocrats was caused by the inadvertent consumption of lead used in making dishes and pots and cups.

Take that, Jerry Falwell. Undoubtedly, there are legions of Bible-thumpers out there who will be disappointed by Bisel's work. They should note that many art historians now believe that at least some of Vincent van Gogh's crazed genius may have derived from the painter's predilection for a white lead-laced pigment. Lead poisoning is a chemical failure, not a moral or a mental one. Still, that probably won't sell as well from the pulpits and the podiums as generic depravity and plain, old-fashioned sin.

[*June 2, 1983*]

The New York Times Book Review

Learned socio-economic commentaries from a fan of the torero, Prof. Juan Antonio Ramirez of the University of Salamanca, laboring in the correspondence section of the *New York Times Book Review:*

And how can it be said that "the bullfight sets Spain aside among civilized people even today"? I am amazed at Mr. Davenport's historical, anthropological and esthetic readings. Let's be serious. In every *civilized* country (including Spain) there are "clean" corporate headquarters where cruel decisions are made that cause terrible human injustice.

[*March 6, 1983*]

The American Book Review

The eminent Dr. Prescott S. Nichols, teacher of "prison literature" at San Diego State University, dumps the contents of his mind onto a page while reviewing an imbecilic anthology of "prison lit" and awaits the arrival of the inevitable garbage truck:

These people *are* victims. After all, there *is* racism in our society; there *is* poverty and there *is* oppression. And there is no question that it is overwhelmingly the poor, the minorities, and the oppressed who end up in our nation's prisons. Moreover, it is also a fact that the prisons themselves constitute one of the grossest forms of oppression. However, we must finally come back to the individual's own attitude and self image. We—not just prisoners—need, it is true, to have enough social and political understanding to realize the extent to which we are victims of circumstance, though ultimately we have to take responsibility for the concreteness of our own individual lives.

[*November/December 1982*]

The Guardian

Reflections of an irenic hue from a reader of Britain's incomparable *Guardian,* who, it is only fair to say, lives very far from Eastern Europe:

Hugh Seeds's letter about Gandhi (January 23) was very interesting. He concludes that the early Maori leader Te Whiti was unsuccessful in nonviolent resistance against the British in 1870, and what chance would Gandhi have had against the Russians?

It would be nice to predict, in any instance, the likely success of non-violent resistance, though there are some, like Gandhi, who would rather fail a thousand times than be the perpetrator of mass violence. But what about the Russians? Hugh Seeds speaks as if it is obvious that "they" are far more callous than the British authorities were in 19th century New Zealand.

When the possibilities of violent resistance are too awful to contemplate, one might have to resort to nonviolence. These were the tactics employed by the Czechs when Soviet tanks entered their country in 1968. Young people talked to the soldiers. Supply trains took three weeks to reach their destination. Their effectiveness in demoralising and converting Soviet soldiers is indicated by the fact that the entire force had to be sent back and replaced every few weeks. This was a remarkable achievement, and may well be among the reasons why Solidarity was allowed to flourish for so long, and why Poland was not subjected to a similar invasion.

Gill Westcott
Leeds

[*March 6, 1983*]

The Des Moines Register

A leading congressional moron descants on a papal weakness:

Iowa Representative Berkley Bedell criticized the Catholic Church hierarchy Sunday for not working hard enough to end violence in war-torn Central America.

Bedell, speaking at Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Des Moines, praised nuns and priests working in Central America, but said church leaders have not condemned American aid to forces attempting to overthrow the government of Nicaragua. Bedell blames American involvement for fueling violence in the region.

"I think you've got a problem with your pope," said Bedell, a Methodist. "The problem is the pope comes from Poland," Bedell said. "He's seen what the heel of communism had done" in that nation.

Thus, Bedell suggested, Pope John Paull II takes a hard anti-communist line in Central America and would be eager to see the defeat of leftist governments there.

[*May 23, 1983*]

The Nation

The Rev. Alan Wolfe proffers more moral tosh in that fabulous journal of progressive jesuitry, the *Nation.*

I have yet to meet a single writer of my generation and temperament who *likes* the Soviet Union. About the most that can be said for it is that while the United States always supports the wrong side, at least the Soviet Union has helped the cause of progress, sometimes inadvertently, by aiding revolutions in the Third World. . . . A problem peculiar to our time is how to distance oneself from one side in the cold war without falling into the clutches of the other. For every Soviet apologist I have encountered, there are ten on the opposite side who have lost their moral outrage at the United States in their eagerness to condemn Russia. As I grew more critical of the Soviet Union, I wondered if I too would moderate my hostility toward U.S. meddling in the Third World. I need not have worried. A supremely anti-Communist Administration like Ronald Reagan's is all one needs to remind oneself of the moral vacuousness of American foreign policy.

[*January 22, 1983*]

The Chicago Tribune

What happens when the inhabitant of a statist regime confronts the simplicities of plain-black-coat American republicanism:

A Soviet schoolgirl who wrote to President Reagan pleading for peace had her letter returned because the U.S. Postal Service said the addressee was unknown, the Soviet Communist Party daily *Pravda* said Thursday.

Pravda published prominently a photograph of the envelope bearing a U.S. postal stamp with the words "Return to sender" and "Addressee unknown."

. . . *Pravda* quoted the schoolgirl as saying she could not believe her eyes. "I understood that the American Postal Service did not know where the White House was," she said.

[*June 18, 1983*]

The New York Times Magazine

Still more New Age Christian ravings:

Miss Gilliss, who was one of the first women to be ordained as a priest, thinks that "if people grow up seeing both men and women perform a range of roles in the church, their associations will be different from people who have seen only men perform those roles."

She explains: "A burial service offered by a very pregnant woman would present the whole death-birth cycle. Baptism is another such rite. What the man does is so clean, so different from the real birth process, with pure water in place of blood, perhaps rose petals instead of water, because water looks too much like amniotic fluid. The first time I saw a woman baptize her own baby I realized there was a real claiming of power."

[*September 5, 1982*]

The Washington Post

A Mr. Bill Kelley offers worldly sapience, based on the facts, in the correspondence section of the eminent *Post*:

Secretary Shultz's analogy implies that he believes the Soviets do not share our aims of peace and arms control. This attitude is insulting and can be expected to continue to generate animosity. The working assumptions should be that they share our aims.

[*June 22, 1983*]

The Indianapolis Star

The Hollywood de Beauvoir continues her excogitations in a secular age:

Shirley MacLaine knows she is in danger of sounding like a real flake. But she can't help it.

. . . Her questioning mind led her to seek out trance channelers in Malibu and then in Stockholm, Sweden. Disembodied spiritual masters spoke to her through these mediums.

One, Tom McPherson, channeled through a mild young man named Kevin, held forth in a thick brogue, "Tip o' the hat to you," and asked for a mug of tea before repeating the advice given her once by Gerry, her friend in the British Parliament: "To get to the fruit on the tree, one must go out on a limb."

"I was silent—floored," MacLaine writes of this experience. "I was struck dumb. How the hell could this guy know about us? He not only knew about Gerry—he knew what Gerry had said."

"Adjusting his vibrations," Kevin assumed the character of John, informing MacLaine that she had been incarnated several times during a 500,000-year period. Twice as a male, once as a female. He told her that she and Gerry were married in a previous life and that Gerry had taken part in cultural-exchange programs with extraterrestrials. She had several lifetimes with David, too, she learned.

. . . Eventually her search led her to the Andes with David, where an extraterrestrial woman named Mayan from the Pleiades supposedly had helped him in his spiritual conversion. One day, while climbing to 15,806 feet, MacLaine and David saw a signpost, which, translated from Spanish, said: "Flying Saucers Do Exist. UFO Contact Point."

[*June 26, 1983*]

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